Pathways to God

Please do not take
from the parlor.

Y. W. C. A.

Manchester College.

Pathways to God

by

Alexander C. Purdy

Converse

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PATHWAYS TO GOD

Chapter One

Where the Problems Begin

"I DON'T know what I believe." "If this or that cannot be squared with present-day scientific conclusions, is there anything left of my childhood faith?" "What am I to believe about God and Christ, about prayer and immortality, about suffering and sin?" "What shall be my attitude toward the church?" "Isn't one religion just as good as another, if you live up to it?" Hosts of queries like these arise from the youth of to-day and demand instant and satisfactory solution. "A question mark rampant over three bishops dormant with motto query, is the coat of arms of to-day," someone has wittily remarked.

One of the crowning glories of youth is its insistence that all these puzzles of thought, age-old though they be, shall and indeed must be answered at once. This demand for the truth about God and man and the world is the driving force which makes for progress. But the briefest experience convinces us that final answers are not forthcoming. Ready-made solutions fit only the standardized mind. They bulge at the neck or are short in the sleeves when tried on anyone who shows a suspicion of individuality. We must live with these problems all our lives, getting new glimpses of the truth, stating the problem in a new way, standing on the shoulders of our fathers that we may see the farther horizons, and applying to the changing human situations the old and abiding principles of life.

But if final solutions are out of our reach, we are not doomed thereby to unending doubt and confusion and

uncertainty. We may be just as sure of arriving at a working faith, if we "hold fast . . . firm unto the end," as we may be sure that truth in its full-orbed beauty is better than our best and truest conception of it. In this study we shall seek such a working faith.

What question shall we put first? It is more important to know where to begin our questioning than it is to be able to reel off somebody else's answers. And more important than that is the attitude of the questioner. What shall my attitude be toward the puzzling questions which concern religious problems? Let us begin with the latter query, for perhaps as many people lose their grip on religion through an unconsidered attitude of mind as through the acknowledged difficulties of belief.

I. THE ATTITUDE OF THE QUESTIONER

He must be sincere in his desire to know the truth. The "sermon taster" in "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush," who was so expert in sampling the various brands of sermonic food has her counterpart in the student who confers with every traveling secretary or college preacher solely because he or she has the conference habit and wants to add another specimen to a large collection of interviews.

Little children sometimes ask questions which contain within themselves the answers, just for the sake, apparently, of making conversation. "Why do you water the plant so that it will grow, for?" is a fair sample of scores of questions which one small child of

my acquaintance will ask in a single day. The social motive which prompts such questions is commendable in the child, but questions which arise out of conclusions already formed from a mind already closed on the problem do not make for the discovery of new truth. They are not genuine.

But genuine questions however trivial they may seem are profitable because they lead sooner or later to the big questions which really matter. The cure of many a small confusion is to face the ultimate question behind it. We fool with little doubts, many of them unworthy to be dignified by the title of honest doubt because they are really no more than mental laziness or temperamental moods. I once knew a college man, who because he was a cripple, had more time for thought than the average student. He found himself confronted with many intellectual difficulties and so he decided to stop fooling with his little doubts and face the supreme issue. He decided to live for six months as though there were no God. His was no cheap or superficial denial with the lips for he told no one of his determination, but he tried with the whole endeavor of a fine mind to shut God out of all his life. He came out of that experience with a faith which could not be shaken. Not all his intellectual difficulties were solved by the experience but they were put in their proper perspective.

He needs to remember that faith outruns reason although it must run in the same direction. This is a distinction which we must develop more fully in our discussion of the meaning of faith, but it is essential to the right attitude of the questioner that such a distinc-

tion shall be pointed out at the beginning of our study. Personal religion may be warm and vital before any of the great problems of religion are fully answered. The Christian faith calls upon us to establish the probabilities of its fundamentals by putting them into practice long before we can demonstrate them to our intellectual satisfaction. The Christian religion offers us a working hypothesis for life which we are asked to try out. Jesus talked about the birds and the flowers but his thought leaped past test tube and microscope to the astounding conclusion that "*your Heavenly Father* feedeth them" and "*God* doth so clothe the grass of the field."

The New Testament does not ask us to begin with primitive man's childlike ideas of God and then climb laboriously the long ascent of man's thinking; it asks us to begin with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are under every obligation to test that hypothesis in laboratory and library. But we are asked, first of all, to test it in life, since it is, first of all, a way of life. And if we can establish in this way a probability as to the reasonableness of faith, we can then proceed to test the fundamentals of that faith in every possible direction and with the least loss of warmth and vitality in our religious life. Is not this the glory and the power of Christ's message? Whether a man holds a pick or a shovel, a test tube or a microscope in his hands, he has in the Christian faith a working hypothesis for the relationships of life. It was Jesus' method to meet men's perplexities in this way. He dared them to make the venture of faith in the realm of practical living. "Follow me," he said. Their

thinking lagged behind in that discipleship, but the reasonableness of the Master's way of life held them.

He needs humility. There are several ways of acquiring the requisite humility for such a study as we are facing. The best way would be the laborious but wonderfully fruitful study of the history of man's thinking through all the centuries on each of the problems which we shall discuss. How few are the fundamental questions which have not been asked and intelligently answered by thoughtful men living millenniums before our time. Just because their modes of thought are unlike our own, we are tempted to think them but children, when it is our own ignorance and egotism which keep us from seeing into the minds and hearts of the men of past ages who thought well and to some purpose. Will the folk of the year 2000 smile as contemptuously at our attempts to state and solve the riddles of to-day as we smile at the folk of the year 1000?

Think of but a single illustration. The war and its consequences have brought vividly before us all the great unsolved problem of suffering. Why this sort of world in which little children must suffer not only to the third and fourth generations but unto many generations for the sins of the fathers? Jeremiah looked for a day when it would no longer be true to say, "the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge," but that day has not yet come. As we face the puzzling problem of suffering, it is a good exercise in humility to read and ponder the Book of Job. For the author of that book went to the depths of the problem and his answers include practically every solution

which has ever been suggested, and he who tries to answer the question about suffering without relying upon the work of the past is apt to fall into the difficulties which wise men saw and avoided thousands of years ago.

And then humility will come to us as we occasionally turn our minds upside down and shake ourselves out of the ruts of thinking which so easily hem us in. It is wholesome to remember that we are a problem for society and perhaps a problem for God just as truly as society and God are problems for us. We get so used to thinking of the universe as our nut to crack and our puzzle to put together that we forget the other and equally important side of the same question. Especially is this true of the student attitude. The student is urged and enticed to think of all problems as awaiting his solution and of all causes as lost unless he places himself at their head. But the student himself is just as much a problem to his home, his faculty, his community, the business or profession which he decides to grace as these institutions can possibly seem to be to him.

And it is just thinkable that we are God's greatest problem, and that while we debate and argue about Him, He is seeking some means of access to our crowded thought life and into the ambitions and hot desires that well up within us. At least such an attitude ought to help us to a proper humility, that we may take off our shoes as we tread the holy ground before us in this study.

The questioner, then, needs sincerity, the knowledge

that faith becomes reasonable enough for all practical purposes before we can untangle every perplexity, and a genuine humility.

II. THE FIRST QUESTION

All the problems begin with us. And this is more than to say that men and not animals or angels raise the perplexing questions about God and man and the world. It is to say that we ourselves are the first perplexing question. The man behind the question,—Why does he ask it? What manner of being is he? What is he meant to be? How far has he got on his way? Does he need any help? Is he fitted to receive any help?

The first question to put is, What about me? Not what about God or immortality, but what about me? Strangely enough this is the last question in the history of thought to which man has given systematic attention. Yet it is clear that it ought to come first, for suppose I should reach a satisfying conclusion about God only to discover that I have no need of Him or that I am not such a being as to be able to have any dealings with Him, then my efforts will have been wasted.

Obviously we cannot undertake to follow here the track of the modern psychologist. Such a task would be beyond the scope of this little book. We can only roughly block out the outstanding characteristics of the human with especial reference to his religious life, and then test our observations in the sphere of our own experience. This does not mean that we are to undertake a morbid sort of self-analysis. That would be just the wrong way to begin our study of the religious life and

its problems. Jesus did not encourage ingrowing religion. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus inquiring the way to eternal life Jesus told him that he needed to turn away from thoughts about himself and his own goodness or badness, to cut loose from it all and forget himself in the kingdom enterprise. (Mark 10:17 ff.) Self-consciousness is weakness and it is one of the besetting sins of youth which our study should help us to overcome. We need then a laboratory in which to work in order that we may study objectively this self which is so close at hand. "A man's religion," Professor Hocking has said, "is the hiddenest thing in him." How shall we get at this hidden deep-lying thing without probing morbidly in the recesses of our own lives? Fortunately we have a wonderfully sufficient laboratory ready to our hand.

III. THE BIBLE AS A LABORATORY

The Bible contains the most complete collection of human specimens in existence. Human beings in action and meditation, in hope and despair, in faith and skepticism, in courage and cowardice, in love and hate, walk through its pages. The Bible is richer in types of humanity than any city street. The "rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief," are all there with variations and sub-classifications. The pages of the Bible are thronged with people who invite investigation and reward the patient investigator by relating their experiences and by exhibiting their motives with a realism which is often startling. One of the reasons why millions of copies of the Bible

are sold each year is because it is packed so full of human as well as divine life. One has only to select at random and from memory a score of Biblical characters as different as Jacob, Esau, Jezebel, Joseph, Deborah, Lot, Samson, Ruth, Amos, Paul, Judas, Dives, Lazarus, Job, Hosea, Simon the Zealot, Solomon, Herod, Joseph and Mary. What a medley of passions and motives and problems these names bring to mind!

And the people in the Bible are so like us in every fundamental way! To be sure, the Bible deals pretty largely with the Hebrews, a single race. But it shows that race in contact with at least a dozen different peoples. It runs the gamut of all the known types of patriotism from the narrowest most intense nationalism to the most exalted ideal of sacrificial national service. And again the economic and social situations which the Bible reveals are quite different from our own. But we can find here and there in this laboratory men with a startling modern message, the great prophets with their call to social justice, for example. And at the center of this book there is Jesus, whose life and teachings have been illuminated by our modern social and economic situation, until we see that his concern about individuals, "even the least of these," has behind it something more august than mere sentiment. His passion was that "humanity might be organized according to the will of God" as Rauschenbusch has paraphrased the "Kingdom of God."

The people in the Bible are like us. We do not need to commit ourselves to any theory about the unchangeableness of human nature. We have only to confess

with humility that we have not changed very much from some of those weak and erring Biblical characters and that the most splendid of them are still beyond us in their achievement. We turn, then, to the Bible for help in answering our first question, What about man?

IV. AT WORK IN THE LABORATORY

Take for example the vivid biography of Jacob (Genesis, chapters 25-33, except chapter 26). How faithfully his chequered career is described and with what realism! It is not always a pleasant picture and more than once we find ourselves sympathizing with Jacob's victims. The bitter struggle characterizing Jacob's life is described, with grim humor, as beginning at the birth of the twins, Jacob and Esau. Then the famous birthright incident follows, in which Jacob by a base deception planned by an ambitious and unscrupulous mother and executed by an apt and willing son, defrauds his short-sighted if more likeable brother. The guilty Jacob flees the country. His conduct up to this point reveals only an energy and ambition employed most ignobly. Covetousness, falsehood and cowardice seem to be his outstanding traits. But with dramatic contrast, and at the same time with faithfulness to human nature, comes the vision at Bethel just at this moment of spiritual bankruptcy. God appears to Jacob and we are made to understand that other factors besides selfishness and ambition are seeking the mastery over his life.

The fog lifts only for a moment, however, and then shuts down again. The dealings of the crafty Jacob

and the crafty Laban are only raised above the plane of the sordid by the love of the former for Rachel, a love which mastered the selfish schemer so that seven years "seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had to her." Between the two kinsmen it was "a case of Shylock versus Shylock, of steel cutting steel: Laban is sharp and unprincipled but Jacob is able to surpass him in the game of wits." It is the same crafty Jacob who steals away from Laban, not penniless as he had come but with his wives and his flocks and his herds. Then, with the wronged Esau awaiting him and the hostile Laban behind him, he comes again as at Bethel face to face with God in the supreme crisis of his life.

We need to unthink our modern thoughts to sense what happened to Jacob at the ford of the Jabbok, but there is enough of the nomad in us all to make us breathe more quickly as we think of that midnight struggle. Faith has been quick to seize upon each detail of this classic story to symbolize religious experience, for it is rich in spiritual and artistic possibilities. Each may see it as the record of some spiritual struggle in his own life. It is enough to say that Jacob came to close grips with the Unseen. He had been a "religious" man throughout his life. Even the trickery had had its place as forwarding the plans which he felt to be included in God's future for him. "Although his religion was the bargaining type, it was genuine and the most powerful force in his life. Energy, persistency and ambition were the other qualities which enabled him at last to triumph over his glaring faults of meanness, deceit and selfishness. His life as portrayed, vividly

illustrates the constant conflict going on in every man between his baser passions and his nobler ideals. Jacob is the classic prototype of Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. His experiences show clearly how in divine Providence the varied fortunes and especially the misfortunes of life, may develop the nobler impulses in the human heart, and how the meanest and most unpromising men are never beyond the pale of the divine care."*

If Jacob is a conspicuous example of a mean and unpromising man who yet possessed spiritual potency, David is a conspicuous example of a man after God's own heart who yet possessed glaring weaknesses. Idealized and idolized as the great king is in the later Hebrew accounts, the plain tale of his sins is interwoven with the nobility and beauty of his character in the books of Samuel. His really notable statecraft and military skill we may pass by save to note how diplomacy and genuine religious feeling are so intermingled in his career that we cannot always distinguish them. Was it partly diplomacy and shrewd political insight which made David spare Saul's life, and punish the messenger who finally brought tidings of his death, or was it only a deep and genuine reverence for the person of the Lord's anointed? At any rate David's story offers a nice study of mixed motives.

When we think of David's personal traits, the same complexity is present. He was lovable and loving.

* This summary follows very closely the comment in *Heroes and Crises of Early Hebrew History*, by Professor C. F. Kent, p. 101 ff., and the quotations are from the same source.

Think of his friendship for Jonathan. Remember the mighty men who brought water "from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!" and of the humility and genuine loyalty to Jehovah which his refusal "to drink the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives," reveals. (II Samuel 23:13-17.) He was a magnanimous and loyal friend. Although cruel in warfare perhaps he was less so than his enemies. His personal valor cannot be questioned. He had tact and vision and ability which he tempered with humility.

But the lie which this same David told to the priests of Nob cost eighty-five of them their lives. (I Samuel 22:6-23.) His sins of adultery against Bathsheba and murder against Uriah bore their loathsome fruitage not only in David's life but in the unsavory lives of his sons, Amnon and Absalom, Adonijah and Solomon. Of Adonijah it is remarked, "his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" We are not surprised that David had little to say of counsel or rebuke to his sons in the latter years of his life.

It is only to see David as he was, that we point out the blot on the escutcheon. His knightly figure, strong and beautiful, was not unmarred by sin.

V. SOME TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

No self-respecting investigator will be satisfied with studying two specimens. Fortunately there is almost no limit to the opportunities which the Biblical laboratory affords, but for the moment we must be content with these two and put forward some tentative conclu-

sions in regard to the first question we have raised, What about man?

We are a mixture of good and bad. The one is as natural to humanity as the other. "Real man is both altruistic and selfish, sympathetic and egoistic." No one in this laboratory is utterly and "naturally" bad. Jacob's early days are filled with unpleasant practices but even the black beginning of his career is relieved by higher moments. Even Judas must have had qualities which led Jesus to choose him as one of the twelve. When theologians have talked about the "natural" man and his utter badness they have arrived at him by stripping him "of all altruistic traits, of all spiritual potency, of every upward-striving tendency. It hardly needs to be said at this date that there is no such being as this so-called 'natural' man. He is an artificial construction. He is no more real than the Jabberwock is. He is an abstract figure, existing nowhere outside of books."*

Nor is there anyone in this laboratory of men who is utterly and naturally good. Theologians have seldom tried to represent the natural man in this light, but we all share the satisfaction which comes with the belief that a large part of our sins are really chargeable to our ancestors or to society as a whole. What a comfort to mothers to know that what little Willie is doing is the result of forces playing through and upon his little life causing him to do things which are undoubtedly wrong but for which he can hardly be held accountable. If only Willie himself could be rid of the "something in-

* *Second Period of Quakerism,* Braithwaite, Introductory Chapter by R. M. Jones.

side him which he can't do what he wants to with" he could view the situation with the same philosophic calm. But for some unaccountable reason his disturbing conscience charges him with at least contributory negligence in the sinning of his ancestors and society. There may be discovered extenuating circumstances for most of the sinning which the Bible describes but the sense of guilt is ever present.

We are meant for something more than we have attained. This is expressed or implied throughout the Bible. On almost every page humanity is seeking for fuller life. There is a restlessness, an urge, a divine discontent from beginning to end. What is it that men are after? Paul sums it up in a noble phrase, "till we all attain . . . unto a fullgrown man." We want to be full grown persons. And the omnipresent sense of failure haunts us. Our commonest phrases reveal it. Mr. G. K. Chesterton has said, "If I wish to dissuade a man from drinking his tenth whiskey and soda, I slap him on the back and say, Be a man! No one who wished to dissuade a crocodile from eating its tenth explorer would slap it on the back and say, Be a crocodile!"

We need help. The Bible is likewise one unbroken testimony to the fact that we need help to be full grown men, and that tirelessly we have been searching for the help we stand in need of,—searching and finding.

Motive power for the achievement of personality is the supreme need of humanity. How and where human folk have got help for living the fullest life, that is the central question of our study.

Chapter Two

Pathways to God

"IF he had not found near the end of his adolescent period an organizing, centralizing and constructive power, his story would have been vastly different. But fortunately he did find the centralizing power,—'the key,' as he calls it, 'which opened life to me.' Constructive energy swept into him as though a mountain reservoir of power had been tapped, and this youth evidently marked with hysteria . . . rose into a robust and virile man, 'stiff as a tree and pure as a bell,' ready to stand the world with its jeers, its blows and its barbaric prisons; able to carry his message on foot or on horseback through England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland and to carry through an amazing western missionary journey through Barbadoes and Jamaica, across to the shore of Maryland, up to the New England colonies and back to the Carolinas."* These words in which Professor Rufus Jones describes the experiences of the young George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, hit off the need of everyone who stands at the beginning of life. The organizing, centralizing and constructive power, the key which the young George Fox found was the experience of God within the limits of his own personality. God who was commonly believed to speak through such recognized channels as priest and Bible, had spoken directly and immediately to him.

The Bible takes it for granted that there is a God who is a Person. Even those parts of the Bible which

* *Beginnings of Quakerism,* Professor Rufus Jones; Introduction, p. xxxi.

raise the question as to whether God cares anything about man, or those passages which give expression to the desire that God would leave man alone, as Job does on occasion, do not raise the doubt as to God's existence and personality. These are two very large assumptions, but it can hardly be questioned that the men of the Bible got help for their lives or failed to get it and so made shipwreck of those lives according to the way in which they related themselves to the Unseen. It is quite worth our while to test this statement and if we find it true to ask what led them to this relationship with a personal God.

It is worth our while because we need a working religion to-day, that is to say some organizing, unifying relationship with life as it is which will give us the key to it. Many voices confirm this need. It is almost a commonplace to say that the need of the world is a spiritual need, the need of a new spirit, a new attitude toward life. The hundred-foot dinosaur is found only in the natural history museum because he could not adapt himself to a changing environment. We have built a dinosaur civilization and unless we can get astride it and run it, it will fall over on us and crush us as it so nearly did in the late war. We need men and women big enough to run the machine; not "men to match our mountains" for we have tamed and harnessed the mountains and we know how to make them lie down or roll over at our bidding; but men who shall know how to use the great mechanical civilization which has been produced in as purposeful and detached a fashion as they use their high-powered motors on

errands of service or mercy; men who will not go "joy riding" in the wonderful and powerful car of modern civilization.

And to produce such manhood and womanhood we must arrive at some worthy relationship with life. We need a working religion.

I. HELP IS AVAILABLE

When one studies the careers of the outstanding figures in the Bible, he discovers that in every case the "key which opened life" to them was a relationship with God. At least these people themselves felt that such was the case. Think of four such outstanding figures as Moses, Amos, Isaiah, and Paul. Let us look at them in turn for a moment.

The achievements of Moses are among the most noteworthy of history. He took a group of serfs very loosely bound together by racial ties and sundered by clan loyalties and jealousies and made out of them something like a nation under circumstances which were often disheartening and always difficult. He gave them the beginnings of a constitution and a code of law. He was a prophet, a statesman, a soldier! How shall we account for his magnificent achievement? His training at the court of Egypt gave him practical lessons in statecraft which stood him in good stead in the desert difficulties. His shepherd life in Midian and his contact with the religion of Midian rounded out his education. He had native ability and initiative which early revealed itself even though it found misdirected and

rash expression. (Exodus 2:11-15.) But none of these factors are given as the key to his achievement in the Biblical narrative. There, the organizing experience of his life is declared to be a vivid religious experience which took place when he met and related his life to God. And the subsequent history of the Hebrew people for many generations was so associated with the mountain where Moses is reported to have met God that we can hardly escape the conclusion that some tremendous happening was staged there.

Amos, the shepherd-prophet of Tekoa, is peculiarly attractive to the modern because he interpreted religion in the terms of its social and moral implications. Righteousness as he interpreted it, meant justice and honesty and fair dealing between man and man. He helped to shift the basis of religion from the ceremonial to the moral. He was not constructive in the same way as Moses. He left no institutions behind him but he cleared away the rubbish of unsightly structures that others might build. Whence came this fearless clear-eyed man and where did he get such insight? It might be argued that Amos had made a social survey of northern Israel, so well does he know the conditions there. But where did he get the courage to speak out? By what authority did he condemn conditions which had the sanction of both church and state, he, a rude shepherd of the hills? The motive power of his message was God. The relation of cause and effect between God's command and Amos' unsparing prophecies was as certain and as clear to him as the facts of his daily life in the desert. When you see two men walking

across the desert together, said Amos, you know that it is because they have agreed so to do. It is a deliberate plan, for in the trackless wastes men do not just chance to meet. And when you hear a lion roar in the desert there is always adequate cause for it. No lion roars unless he is ready to spring upon his prey, else he would frighten his quarry away. When a bird skimming along the horizon is suddenly seen to fall, it is because the trap has been sprung. (Amos 3:3 ff.) For every effect there must be an adequate cause, the prophet seems to argue. "The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?"

Isaiah, the prophet-prince who gained the ear of kings and made his presence felt in the counsels of state, saw more immediate results from his work than did Amos. He consistently advocated the unpopular principle of neutrality as between Babylon and Egypt. It was wise and statesmanlike counsel as subsequent events showed. How did he arrive at such a policy? He was trained like Moses in the royal court life. He knew the international situation, the might of Babylon and the might of Egypt and the folly of an alliance with the one which must mean invasion by the other, since little Judah was the buffer state. He had the genius to see that "in quietness and confidence shall be thy strength." And yet this is not Isaiah's own explanation of his counsel. He tells us that when he was a young man, he went to the temple and had a vision of God, seated on a throne, high and lifted up, and he sets forth the meaning of that vision in vivid symbolic language.

(Isaiah, chapter 6.) It is the key to all his achievement.

Or think of Paul, the lawyer, the poet, the missionary, the statesman. It is possible to trace in his life story and in his letters the various influences of his training and experience. He got dialectic skill from his rabbinic training and love of sports from the arena at Tarsus, and unusual breadth of vision from contacts with the cosmopolitan life of Greek cities, and a passion for righteousness from the Hebrew blood in his veins. But he does not give any of these diverse elements as the key to his life. The organizing experience for Paul happened on the Damascus road. Paul's own explanation of his life, as given to King Agrippa, was that he had not been "disobedient to the heavenly vision."

These men got help for their lives, a simplifying organizing experience which enabled them to live adventurously and to some purpose. They had a working religion. But if the experiences of these Biblical heroes are merely isolated wonders, if they show no intimation of spiritual laws which we may discover and apply to our lives, they are our despair rather than our inspiration. For how are we to come at this Help? What are the pathways to God?

II. PERSONALITY AT ITS BEST A PATHWAY TO GOD

The spiritual biographies to which we have referred in the previous section are not simple or obvious. So far we have only dealt with them as great facts. Something happened to these men which shaped and organ-

ized their lives in a powerful way. They attribute their experience to the personal action of a living God upon their lives. He seems, as we read these accounts, to have laid hold upon these men for His own purposes. Is it possible to say more than that something unaccountable happened to them, something beyond our analysis? How did these men find God? Is there anything about their experiences which will illuminate our pathway?

Look at their lives again with this query in mind, Is there anything in the experience of a Moses or a Paul which will help me to find the key which will open life to me?

If one reads the old familiar story of Moses, for instance, with such a question in the back of his mind, he is apt to discover that it is not just a pious bit of history threadbare and dull in its coloring but a spiritual biography quivering with life on tiptoe. The page headings of our Bibles bring back the story of Moses in the most prosaic fashion: Israel oppressed in Egypt, Male children slain, Kills an Egyptian and flees to Midian, His marriage, The Burning Bush. The last item always fires the imagination, for flame answers to flame, the inner to the outer as it did in Moses' case. Let us pass by for the time the external features of this meeting with the Unseen, the bush which burned with fire and yet was not consumed and the Voice which spoke so clearly, and try to imagine what was going on in Moses' mind and heart. It would be a great experience to cross the seas which separate us from the little country of Palestine, and then to journey into the south-

country and find the land that was Midian, and then to identify the very mountain where Moses had his revelation; and if we could find the very sheep trail he followed that day over the back of the mountain and the bush itself, what a discovery that would be! It would be exceedingly valuable to know beyond a shadow of a doubt just where the mountain Horeb-Sinai is to be located. But he who discovers the pathway in mind and heart that led him to God, makes a far more valuable discovery for himself and for others.

What was Moses thinking about as he walked the hillside so many centuries ago? Could he have been thinking of anything save the wrongs of his people? What had been the dominant motive of his action and the consuming passion of his heart? Was it not along the way of sympathy for them and yearning for their deliverance that his heart was moving that momentous day? For them he had left the court of Pharaoh, for them he was an exile. Was not that the inner pathway that led him to God? At any rate God met Moses on that pathway. "And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians. . . . And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them." It was as though Moses heard the voice of the Eternal saying, Moses, Moses, do you think that you alone care for those Hebrews, that there is no clearer Eye than yours to see, no more

compassionate Heart to feel, no mightier Hand to relieve? "Why so hot, little man?" And as a result of that revelation Moses went forth a changed man and things began to happen. His hot little soul was linked with the comprehending soul of God. His fickle purposes were steadied by the will of God. His uncertain wisdom was enlarged by the companionship of God. That which was best and noblest in him had led him to God. It has ever seemed inconceivable to the men and women who have thought most deeply that Truth and Justice and Mercy and Love are not in the very nature of things. They have been led to believe that as a stream cannot rise higher than its source so the best and highest in us flows forth from God Himself and when we feel the lift and the urge of a noble impulse it is a pathway which will lead us Godward.

Each spiritual biography which we have studied in the preceding section reveals the same pathway to God. The great prophets seem to be forever saying, between the lines of their messages, If in my own heart this passion for righteousness and truth, this love for unlovely people, this hatred for hypocrisy and injustice and sin moves me to do things which I shrink from doing and for which I must pay the price in sneer and taunt and suffering, there must be a Heart more loving than mine, a Mind more farseeing than mine, a Hand more powerful than mine, a great Person who stands above and beyond all persons and is yet seeking to work in and through them.

In the case of Amos his burning sense of the injustice done the poor, "they have sold the righteous for silver,

and the needy for a pair of shoes," led him straight to the God of all Justice. It could not be, he seemed to reason, that God is other than One who declares, "Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as an ever-flowing stream," else the whole world is deceitful and illusory. But nature moves in orderly sequence. "The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?"

Is it possible to read between the lines of Isaiah's vision (Isaiah, chapter 6) in similar fashion? May we discover the pathway along which his mind was moving? "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," he begins his account of his vision, the key which opened life to him. As we read his prophecies we are made to feel how heavily the needs of his countrymen and the wrongs of the times weighed upon him, no doubt had weighed upon him since he was old enough to understand the situation. And then the king died. In his time this king had been a strong and able ruler, but in his last years things had gone from bad to worse in the southern kingdom. And now he was gone. One great man gone, another needed. It was with this sense of need that the youthful Isaiah went to the temple that day. And into his troubled mind came the word "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Another and a Mightier and a Holier was concerned for that little kingdom. It was the best and noblest in Isaiah that led him to God.

How easily and quickly these great heroes of the Hebrew story seem to have found God! But Moses waited a generation in the Midian country and who

can say how long Amos dressed sycamores or Isaiah lived in the court of Judah before they walked the pathway that led them to God? At any rate it was no smooth and easy pathway which Paul followed. The road to Damascus seems in exactly the opposite direction from the ways along which these others whom we have studied were following. Was Paul moving along the course of his own best self when he received his vision? Apparently not, for he was bound for Damascus to hound out Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment. And yet one of the accounts of that vision (Acts 26:14) reports that Paul heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goads." What goads were these against which Paul kicked even while he was displaying such zeal in persecuting the Christians? Paul had a passion for righteousness! He wanted to *be* right, not merely to be *called* right! The extraordinary zeal with which he carried out the letter of the law indicates that he was trying that method to the limit and hoping against hope that it would bring him that sense of inner righteousness which he craved. And then I think that Paul was ever a great democrat. Jew though he was, he was reared in cosmopolitan Tarsus and he knew its life and even loved it if the many illustrations which he uses from Greek city life are an indication. When once he became a Christian, how quickly he saw that the gospel was good news for everybody, Jew, Gentile, male, female, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free. Paul's feet may have been treading the Damascus road but his mind and heart were seeking

a pathway that could lead to a right spirit and good news for all humanity.

Think over these spiritual biographies again. It was not as these men thought about themselves that they found God. It was through their thought about others. A sense of the need of others in which, to be sure, their own needs were included, led them to find that Other who cares more. And that was the key to life for each one of them.

III. NATURE AS A PATHWAY TO GOD

We are still under the spell of the feeling that it is almost pagan to see God in nature. But the Bible is full of it. While it is true that the highest heights of the Old Testament are those passages in which men found their way to God through their sense of need and their sense of justice and truth and mercy and right, yet these same prophetic souls did not hesitate to interpret every aspect of nature as revealing the mind of God. The volcanic conditions around the northern end of the Salt Sea were forever associated in their minds with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The terrible plagues which came upon the Egyptians were the manifestation of Jehovah's mighty hand. It was He who blew the sea back with an east wind all night long that the Hebrews might escape from the pursuing Egyptians and it was Jehovah's eye which "looked forth (in the lightning flash?) on the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians." The thunders of Mt. Sinai were the

audible evidence of his presence. Deborah and Barak won their glorious victory over the Canaanite coalition not simply because the river Kishon overflowed its banks clogging enemy chariot wheels, but because "From heaven fought the stars. From their courses they fought against Sisera." Elijah's triumph at Mt. Carmel over the priests of Baal was sealed by the lightning and the rain though he had yet to learn that the still small voice in the heart of a man is more potent than nature's majesties. The thirsty deer panting for the waterbrook is a picture to the psalmist of the human thirst for God. And so we might go on. They were like children, these Hebrews, innocent of the scientific lore which a little child of to-day can command but finding their way to God as they walked the pathways of nature.

We need only to return for a moment to the story of the burning bush to discover one way in which nature leads us to God. As Moses walked that sheep trail over the mountain absorbed, perchance, in the wrongs of his fellow countrymen in Egypt and restless with a noble discontent, he needed to lift his eyes that he might learn that Another heeded their wrongs and sought his co-operation. But what should arouse Moses to understand that God's care and sympathy enveloped and surpassed his own? The burning bush. "I will turn aside and see this great sight," said Moses. And forthwith Nature had made him forget himself in the contemplation of her mysteries. And as he beheld, that mingled awe and love which we call reverence, stole over him. "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy

feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." And then God could talk to him. His eyes had been lifted to the level where he could see God.

Reverence is a pathway to God. And reverence is born of wonder. There is too little wonder. Go to, now, and be reverent, we exhort, and the miracle does not come off because reverence is not created by exhortation. We need rather to say, Come now and let us wonder together about the stars and the sea and the flaming sun and the tiniest flower and the "shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades, changes, surprises, and God made it all." And as we wonder together, reverence is there among us because it belongs in such company.

There is too little wonder in our lives. "Better a hut to live in and a palace to wonder at, than a palace to live in and nothing to wonder at." And we live in the palace which a knowledge of Nature's ways has created for us and forget that though we have harnessed her lightnings, there is still much to wonder at. The most prosaic setting cannot rob us of the beauty and wonder of life if we have the eyes to see. It was a railroad telegrapher in Zanesville, Ohio,—and unless telegraph offices in that city are far different from the usual sort, there must have been little of beauty or mystery in that setting,—Edward Curran, by name, who could write

> I walked out in God's house across the grass
> Seeing its beautiful carpet and green walls,
> His stairways of the hills where He could pass
> And tramp up on their steps across his halls.

I saw his chairs, the flowery paved plateaus,
His soft divans and tufted velvet dells;
And saw his hearth out where the sunset glows
Where He sits calling night with mellow bells.

IV. THE LIMITATIONS OF THESE PATHWAYS

There are obvious limitations to these methods we have just been considering. All through the Old Testament there is a sense of failure to find the Help men need for their lives which parallels a triumphant sense of the discovery of that Help. A Moses and an Amos and an Isaiah through their splendid personalities find their way to God. But many another must have missed the pathway altogether. And whatever discovery of God even the best of these good and great men arrived at must necessarily have been limited by their own ideas of right and wrong. To the leaders of Israel in the time of the conquest of Canaan, the highest loyalty to Jehovah required that they sometimes "devote" captured cities to Jehovah, which meant nothing less than that they put to death every living creature, men, women, children and animals. This they did as the command of God. In the famous passage between Saul and Samuel over the disposal of Agag (I Samuel 15:1-33) this limitation comes to clear expression. Saul sought to spare the enemy chieftain but Samuel hewed him in pieces before Jehovah. If Saul's motive in attempting to save his enemy had been a loftier humanitarianism, a clearer understanding of the character of God and what he requires, and if Samuel had slain Agag from adherence to mere barbarian instincts, the decision

might be reversed; but the account clearly shows that Saul acted from other than the highest motives and that Samuel was true to the loftiest standard his own mind could apprehend.

God can and does reveal Himself to men through imperfect and uncertain, even through childish conceptions of Him. Men did get aid for their weaknesses, answers to their cries, and direction and power for their living as they climbed the steep ascent of their own best impulses and purposes. So long as faith bore such fruitage in their lives as the eleventh chapter of Hebrews describes, we can hardly afford to smile at the inadequacy of their conceptions of God and the universe. And yet the limitations of this way to God are clear.

And so it is with Nature. She speaks with clearness and force of a God of love and of wisdom, but only to the few, unless they have first come to know such a God in other ways. To others Nature is "red in tooth and claw." And to the many she is inarticulate.

Is there any better way to find a God?

The Christian message is, that human personality and its possibilities have been made luminous in the life and words of Jesus of Nazareth; that He is humanity's finest flower; that as we follow Him we are led along the pathway of the best of which personality is capable, not alone our own uncertain best, to a knowledge of the God who seeks expression in all men's lives as well as through a wonderful world of nature. And this we must think of together.

Chapter Three

Jesus, the Truth about God

IN a little study manual called "God in Everything," purporting to be the letters of Miriam Gray to Parson John in answer to certain questions raised by the latter, the following passages occur.

Parson John writes, "There is something about your way of looking at things which I like. Many of the religious people that I know, when they talk of religion, have a bedside manner and walk about in felt slippers. And if they speak of God, they always tidy themselves first. But you go in and out of all the rooms in God's house as though you were quite at home. You open the doors without knocking, and you hum on the stairs, and it isn't always hymns either. My aunt thinks you are not quite reverent; but, then, she can keep felt slippers on her mind without any trouble. I would really like to know if you were always like this, or whether, as S. says, it is your happy temperament, or what it is."

Miriam Gray replies that she was not always like this and that it isn't her happy temperament. "Until about three years ago I used to think the right thing was to tidy up, and be grave and prepared in my mind. But now it is different, oh! so different. What is the difference, you say? Well, I'm not quite sure, but I think it is something like this. All that time the world was really a school. And though I called God Father, I really thought of Him as a lot of other things first—Schoolmaster, King, Lord Almighty, and so on. It never really got down into my mind that He was *my* Father. And now it is different. I'm not at school;

I've come home. Only for the few! Yes, that's one of the devil's favorite lies. He is always trying to make us divide the human beings made by God into two halves, with a gulf between. Do you think that when Jesus Christ was talking to people as He did, He believed that He had two audiences—those able, and those temperamentally unable, to know their Father?"

And so one might go on quoting passages which reveal an experience of God so real and so wonderful that the writer seeks to make it known to others. How difficult it is to tell another the deepest experiences of life! But buried in these letters there is a sentence which throws a gleam of light upon the pathway to God which we seek to tread. "I must know the God of Jesus Christ *Himself* for *myself*." Miriam Gray had met a radiant and beautiful Person, who spoke always of Another, his Friend and Guide and Father, and she cried out "I must know that Other for myself."

I. JESUS REVEALS GOD

"Master," said Philip, "cause us to see the Father: that is all we need." "Lord, teach us to pray." The disciples who made these requests were good Jews who had back of them the rich religious heritage of Israel. They believed in God and in prayer. Yet all that they knew about religion seemed poor and inadequate when they stood in the presence of Jesus. In spite of the spiritual mountain peaks of the Old Testament upon which stood men like Moses and Amos and Isaiah and Jeremiah, Philip's cry, "Cause us to see the Father," is

our common cry. But why should we turn to Jesus to answer this, the deepest need of humanity?

His whole life was a relationship with God. We do violence to the life of Jesus when we try to separate his character or his teaching or his service from his relationship to God. He Himself credited every choice, every serviceable deed, every revelation of truth to his own intimate relationship with an unseen One whom He called Father. To call men to imitate the character or service of Jesus without revealing to them, as He continually did, the source of what He was and what He did, is to make the Christian program a mere idealistic vision impossibly high and hard. No wonder Christianity is sometimes felt to be a mere dream. It is a dream unless behind it there is a God such as Jesus knew. But if God is the kind of being Jesus knew Him to be, then the program of character and conduct which Jesus outlined is not only workable, but, in the long run, it is the only workable way of living in the world. We sometimes say, "Well, I don't know anything about theology, but I am willing to try to live my life after the pattern Jesus set. I will strive to follow Him." The Christian life is living like Jesus, we say, and that simplifies everything. Christianity is just the Sermon on the Mount, and we don't need anything more. Put the Sermon on the Mount into practice and the problems of the day will be solved. But all this belongs to what Professor Hocking calls the "very true." It is "very true" that the Sermon on the Mount if applied would solve all our problems but how apply it? It is "very true" that living like Jesus is enough. But how does one get the

power to live that way? To say that electricity will light a great building is "very true" but wires must be laid and contacts made and the skill of the electrical engineer be applied, else the statement is mere empty platitude. What will save the starving millions of Russia? Food will. But food won't unless at infinite pains it be gathered and transported and shipped and transported again and distributed to those who need it. And in the same way it is too easy to say that Christianity is the Sermon on the Mount. "How does one live the Sermon on the Mount?" is the question which will face anyone who genuinely experiments with the least precept of it. And we turn to Jesus to see if we may discover.

The mainspring in Jesus' life was his relationship with God. Every choice in his life Jesus expressly credits to this relationship with a heavenly Father. As a boy of twelve He dedicated his life, not to welfare work, but to "my Father's business." Each of the temptations was put behind Him as He related his life to the Father's will. At Caesarea Philippi He met Peter's tempting words with the rebuke, "thou mindest not the things of God but the things of men." The gospels are at one in revealing the fact that Jesus shrank from the death that awaited Him at Jerusalem. It was his conception of the Father's will which led Him to stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. In Gethsemane He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will but what thou wilt." Jesus explicitly and implicitly declared that relationship with God was the

central fact of his life. Is it fair to stress his character and service and neglect this, the source of both? In what character of history is the organizing principle so consistently maintained as in his life?

He who has dealings with Jesus must have dealings with God, for they belong together, not because some theologian has said so but because in actual practice one simply can't get hold of Jesus alone, always there is this relationship with the Unseen whom He knows so well as Father, always He carries our thoughts to this Other One with whom He lived in such constant fellowship. In one of the loneliest moments of his life, when He foresaw that all his disciples would fail Him, He said, "And yet I am not alone because the Father is with me." One never thinks of saying of Jesus, "He came into the presence of God." He lived in that presence all the time.

Jesus' teaching was an unveiling of the character of God. This accounts for the manner of it. "He taught them as having authority and not as the scribes." He did not teach *by* authority, but as *having* authority. He did not need to affect the authoritative manner for there was an authority resident in Him. His was the authority of the powerful personality. But it was more than that, it was the authority of truth. Men who have technical knowledge become authorities, we say, in their lines. Their authority is not given them by the state nor is it due necessarily to anything remarkable about their personal powers but they are witnesses to facts which lie beyond the knowledge or skill of most of us. We say they are authorities. Jesus possessed an au-

thority of that sort which was evident to the folk who listened to his teaching. He taught as though He knew whereof He spoke. Yet He had no appointment from the state nor is his personal magnetism the main source of the authority of his teaching. What did Jesus know that other men did not? What gave his teaching its authority?

Jesus knew God, and his teaching is an unveiling of the character of God. The Sermon on the Mount needs to be studied not simply as a program of human conduct, but as Jesus' statement of the way God would act under perplexing human conditions. He draws for us the picture of God in a human setting. He does not base his teaching on expediency. He does not give a reasoned explanation of each precept. Out of his own God-consciousness He outlines with simple, firm strokes the way to live. That the sanction for the Sermon on the Mount is the character of God is explicitly stated, in the concluding verse of the fifth chapter of Matthew, where Jesus declares, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

When we look at the specific teachings of this Sermon on such matters as almsgiving, fasting, prayer, anxiety about money and food and clothes, we find that each single teaching is keyed to the heavenly Father. The religious acts are to be unostentatious because "thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee." Showy piosity receives showy recognition ("they have received their reward"), but sincere and earnest devotion pays larger returns because God is that way; that is to say, the universe is run on those lines. Similarly the

duty of forgiveness is not set forth as an arbitrary command or a legal formula but it receives its meaning from the fact that "if you forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you." Moreover we are not to be anxious about such things as money or raiment or food because God looks after the birds and the flowers of the field and He cares more for persons than for things or animals.

The beatitudes reveal the same attitude of mind on Jesus' part. He does not seem to be saying that the poor in spirit *ought* to possess the kingdom of heaven or that in some future time they are going to be arbitrarily rewarded by receiving it. He seems to be stating a law of life which is in actual operation here and now but which men have been slow to discover because they don't know the nature of things,—that is to say, the nature of God. It is the law of cause and effect at work in the spiritual realm.

"Love your enemies," said Jesus. Men have found that teaching the most difficult or the most visionary and impracticable, according to their viewpoint, of anything Jesus said. But was not Jesus revealing again the character of God? For the law of love is at work in our world and we see evidence of its working, evidence as impressive as of the law of gravitation. Men break the law of love but they do not break it with impunity. How much of the tears and the hunger of our world to-day is the result of wilful disregard of the law of love?

The teaching of Jesus is shot through and through with the presence of God. It is no more possible to get

at his teaching apart from what He thought about God and his own relationship to God, than it is to draw an accurate picture of his deeds, without reckoning that relationship with the spiritual universe as the source of every one of them.

Jesus' life and teachings, then, reveal the fact of God. Apart from that relationship, his magnificent life simply evaporates.

II. WHAT DID JESUS REVEAL ABOUT GOD?

Our study so far will have prepared us for the discovery that Jesus did not offer any proof, in words, of the existence of God. Everything He was and did and said rests back upon this relationship with the Unseen. Moreover Jesus was dealing with devout Jews who did not question the existence of a Creator God, the Father of the Jewish nation, transcendent and majestic. This picture Jesus corrected and enlarged. He taught men how to think about God. "What is God like?" we ask; for the answer to that question we may look with full assurance to Jesus, because He has given the most satisfactory answer ever formulated.

God was Father for Jesus. It is almost a commonplace to repeat those words but many of us will find ourselves confessing with Miriam Gray, "though I called Him Father, I really thought of Him as a lot of other things first—Schoolmaster, King, Lord Almighty, and so on. It never really got down into my mind that He was *my* Father." But that God was Father for Jesus so impressed itself upon the minds of the disciples

that they never could dissociate God from that relationship in their thinking. Long after Jesus was gone from among them, and after they had come to know God as Father, for themselves, they continued to write of the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," bearing testimony by means of that beautiful phrase to the intimate personal relationship which Jesus had with God. What this relationship meant we have discussed in the preceding section. It was genuine and central for Him, the source of his life. Perhaps we can best get at it by contrasting the partial and inadequate conceptions of God which Jesus' picture corrects.

God was associated in Jesus' mind, primarily with life not with death. That is characteristic of Fatherhood. As a boy of twelve years; when He was facing the problem of how to carry out his life's purpose; at the time of the temptation; in the thick of his active ministry; at these times Jesus turned to the Father for help and guidance. To be sure, He faced the cross with his hand in the Father's hand. But He found God in the flood tide of life. He had learned to know Him as He stood on the threshold of opportunity and He turned to Him in strength as well as in weakness and in joy as well as in sorrow.

We do not find this God who is a Father because we do not look for Him except at moments of distress or dire need. He is available at such times, like any true Father, but we never get really acquainted with Him until we recognize that a mere emergency contact with Him is not enough. As children, when nightfall came, we were taught to pray,

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

And we came to associate the thought of God with dying in the night. How much better to change that third line to "Glad and well may I awake," for most of us need God even more in our waking hours and in our well hours than in sleep or sickness, for we do most damage then. We need God in the successes and achievements of life as much as in the defeats and failures, and we will never know Him as Father until we look for Him there, for it is characteristic of Fatherhood to be tremendously interested in these triumphs of a son or daughter. That little Indian boy of whom it is told that, on the football field, as the ball rose from his foot in a strong straight punt, he was heard to exclaim, "Parum, Yesuswami, parum!" which being interpreted, means, "Look, Lord Jesus, look!" had found the secret of knowing God as Father.

God was a Friend to Jesus. There are people who get no satisfaction at all in thinking about God. They like to think about Jesus, but not about God. They seem to forget that to Jesus the Fatherhood of God was not some official relationship but a relation of friendship. Perhaps here, again, childhood teaching has wrought havoc with our thought of God. "Now, dollie, you be me and I'll be God, and I'll go away and not look at you for a whole hour," said a small girl. The God she knew was not in the remotest way a Friend.

He was a Celestial Detective, a Heavenly Policeman. Look again if you suspect that the God Jesus knew winked at sin and evil in the world. It was this same Jesus whose God was a Friend, who dealt wrong the hardest blows it ever received. But God to Him was never anything but a Friend, in whose presence evil slinks away and the good leaps up with joy.

God was both Father and Friend to Jesus as He lived his life here in our world, on our planet. What you have been suggesting, I hear someone say, is all very beautiful and lovely, but this isn't that kind of world. You are thinking of a world of poetry and of sentiment. The idea of a Fatherly God won't do for this world. Hunger and want and strife and hate are here. "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." The only attitude for a brave man to take is that of the "Invictus":

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from Pole to Pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I will not wince nor cry aloud,
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul!

And I answer, Yes, there is something fine and true about the "Invictus." I doubt not God heard that prayer, for prayer it is, though couched in the language of defiance. There is an element of victory in gritting one's teeth and clenching one's fists and *standing* the world. It is heroic to be able to face thus defiantly all that may come.

But was it a world of poetry and sentiment in which Jesus found a Fatherly God? Was it all flowers and sunshine for Him? Is it true to say that He could believe in such a God because He lived a soft and easy life? No, therein lies the deepest significance of his life for us. That is one reason why the cross is the key to the meaning of his life. All "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" were hurled at Him. His countrymen rejected Him, the church He loved put Him to death, his disciples misunderstood Him, one of them betrayed Him, and at the last He was crucified like the vilest criminal on a cross. His sensitive spirit bore the burden of the world's sin, He felt the weight of it as they should have felt it had their consciences been less blunt. He felt for an instant the separation from God which their action revealed, the most awful possibility which life holds, and He cried out "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He took the "bludgeonings of chance" and yet one cannot think of Jesus as adopting the attitude of the "Invictus." It doesn't seem to fit Him to think of Him as clenching his fists and gritting his teeth and standing the world. Why? Because He did not so much stand the world as He over-

came it. He conquered because He found a divine Ally, a Father.

Jesus taught men who live in the midst of the realities of this world to say, Father.

God was King for Jesus, that is to say, He was big enough for the universe. Just because Jesus knew God as Father we are not to think his thought of God was too small for us. He saw the folly of trying to think of God in terms of space, that is, in terms of bigness, and He led men to think of God in terms of his character. The importance of this we shall endeavor to understand in the next chapter. We need only to say here that when Jesus speaks of God as King, it is the Fatherliness of God which is really central in the picture. This comes to light in the famous parable of Matthew 25, sometimes called the parable of the Great Surprise. There the picture of God is that of a great King on his throne. Before Him are gathered all nations. It is a regal scene. Judgment is pronounced and the sheep are divided from the goats. Upon what basis does the King pronounce judgment? Have the goats failed to observe court etiquette? Have the sheep obsequiously and meticulously performed the last minutia of the royal ceremonial. No, it is the other way around. And yet the King thunders out to those on his left, "Depart from me!" What is the meaning of this strange decision, this Great Surprise? It is just that the King on that "throne of his glory" is a Father who cannot bear that the least of these shall be a stranger or thirsty or hungry or naked or in prison. Jesus said that a Father was seated on the throne of the universe.

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God was Truth and Right and Purity and Love for Jesus. But not abstract Truth or metaphysical Righteousness or cold Purity or formulated Love. God was a Father, a Father of Truth and Right and Holiness and Love. How shall we describe what sort of Father God was to Jesus? The disciples found a way to put it, for they said, "Why God must be like Jesus!"

III. THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Christ is God! the followers of Jesus cried. And on their lips it was a great glad confession that at last they knew what God is like. Their portrait of God had been a vague, an uncertain, perhaps at times a terrible picture, but now Christ filled the whole frame. Jesus is the truth about God! Through his life, his teaching, his death, his resurrection we see and know what God is like. In Jesus human personality is lifted up until it becomes a fit symbol for the divine life. How this came about theologians have been seeking to explain through all the centuries which followed. The first followers of Jesus simply accepted the fact of Christ as a glorious gift of God's love. To adapt a familiar phrase, these early Christians were willing to bet their lives that God is like Christ; that the love and the friendliness and the purity of Jesus are true of God; that the heart of the universe is a Christlike heart; that Jesus is the truth about God.

This is not easier to confess than some credal formulation of how the two natures, the human and the divine, could have united in Jesus. It is harder. Men have found it possible to repeat such formulas with the

complete assent of their intellects, who did not find it possible to live as if God were the kind of God Jesus knew. The sorrow, the evil, the suffering, man's inhumanity to man, the injustice which are so evident in our world make faith in the Father of Jesus Christ the most difficult venture in the world. And so we must think, next, of the experience of God and how it was that Jesus led his disciples not only to recognize and be convinced of God in his life but how to find and know Him in their own living.

Is the main channel of our thought clear to this point? We have thought together of the men of the Old Testament who as they followed the pathways of their own best selves found God and found Him powerful for the accomplishment of their ideals, imperfect and uncertain as those ideals often were. Then, we have just been thinking together of the most marvelous personality of history (to give Him no higher title) and of how his entire achievement He credited to a relationship with a God whom He defined by his own life and deeds as Father. Now we must ask—not as Philip did "Show us the Father"; for we have heard the answer of Jesus and have felt something of its force, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,"—but now we must ask, "We have seen Him, may we know Him?"

Chapter Four

The Experience of God

"I HAD revelled in pictures of all kinds, and I began with a particularly vivid imagination. So before I started for Egypt I really did know the places I should pass and the country I was going to pretty well. I was quite sure of them. . . . One early morning I woke and the ship was still. I tumbled off my berth and turned to the port-hole. There rising up almost within the toss of a ship's biscuit was Gibraltar Rock, just as I had heard of it and seen it pictured a score of times; but heavens! it was REAL!!"*

One reads the life story of Henry Drummond and studies his books and meditates upon the quality of that princely soul until one can almost see the figure George Adam Smith has drawn for us, "a graceful, well dressed gentleman, tall and lithe, with a swing in his walk and a brightness on his face, who seemed to carry no cares, and to know neither presumption nor timidity. You spoke and found him keen for any of a hundred interests. He fished, he shot, he skated as few can, he played cricket; he would go any distance to see a fire or a football match. He had a new story, a new puzzle, or a new joke every time he met you. . . . If you were alone with him, he was sure to find out what interested you and listen by the hour. The keen brown eyes got at your heart and you felt you could speak your best to them. . . . If the talk slipped among deeper things, he was as untroubled and as unforced as before; there was never a glimpse of a phylactery nor a smudge of unction

* *God is Everything,* J. Alfred Sharp. London: The Epworth Press.

about his religion. He was one of the purest, most unselfish, most reverent souls you ever knew, but you would not have called him a saint. The name he went by among younger men was 'The Prince'; there was a distinction and a radiance about him that compelled that title." Yes, we know about Henry Drummond, but our knowledge about him does not suffice. It whets our appetites for something more. It must have been vastly more satisfying to have actually had the experience of meeting him face to face, to have experienced the Reality.

Precisely this difference between knowledge *about* things and people and knowledge *of* them is the difference between the Gospels and the Book of the Acts. For in the Book of the Acts the disciples of Jesus have come to know God, the Father, for themselves. He has become utterly real to them. How this came about in their lives and how it may come about in our own lives is worthy of our careful study.

Jesus is not only the truth about God but He is the way to God. He said, "Follow me" and the way led from Judea through Samaria to Galilee and then by way of Berea back to Jerusalem. But it was likewise a pathway which led those disciples to a sense of the reality of God and to a knowledge of the kind of being God is, as we have seen in the preceding study. But Jesus also prepared them for this personal intimate experience of God of which we are to think together. Of course we are not to think that knowledge *about* God and knowledge *of* God are two quite separate and distinct experiences. It is simply that, for convenience'

sake and that we may get help for our own thinking, we stress the fact that while Jesus was with the disciples they gained a full and clear picture of God which was to lead later on to the deeper personal experience. As they lived with Jesus they shared his fellowship with the Father and all that they had previously been taught about God and all that they had experienced in their own hearts was made more real by his faith. But the Gospels show that these disciples were dependent upon their Master's physical presence for any confident and triumphant certainty about God. (Read Matthew 17: 14-20.) They needed a knowledge of God which should be their own inner possession. How did they gain this experience?

As has been already suggested, as we read the Book of the Acts we become conscious that the followers of Jesus and others who gathered about them had passed through a remarkable experience which is there set down as being "filled with the Holy Spirit." What is the meaning of this expression and may it have any meaning for us to-day? The most remarkable account of this experience is to be found in the second chapter of Acts and at a later point we must give this chapter careful scrutiny. Here we need only to notice that no explanation is given. It is described as a *gift* from God, but it is worth noting that the gift was given to those who were ready to receive it and to those who were expecting it, and they were none other than the disciples of Jesus. This gives us a clue. We will recall his teaching and try to gather some hints as to the way in

which He prepared his disciples not only to know about God but also to know of God.

I. "GOD IS SPIRIT"

"Sir," replied the woman, "I see that you are a prophet. Our forefathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Believe me," said Jesus, "the time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. . . . a time is coming—nay, has already come—when the true worshippers will worship the Father with true spiritual worship; for indeed the Father desires such worshippers. God is Spirit; and those who worship Him must bring Him true spiritual worship." John 4:19-24. (The Weymouth translation.)

The Weymouth translation brings out the point of Jesus' words as the usual versions do not. The Greek permits the words of Jesus to be translated either "God is a Spirit" or "God is *Spirit*," but the latter translation throws the emphasis where it belongs here and where Jesus was continually putting it in his teaching about God.

Jesus opened the way for men to know God for themselves by teaching them how to think about God. He taught them to think of God as Spirit. What did He mean by this? Of course He meant that we are not to think of God as a physical being, having hands and feet. That had no doubt proved helpful in the childhood experience of the Hebrew race. Men who lived

in a world as small as theirs could afford to think of God as a big Superman. To think of Him in physical terms made Him near and real to them. In the same way we do not try, if we are wise, to begin the religious training of a little child by proving to him that his thought of God as a big man is all wrong. We emphasize instead the loving care of God so manifest in the world of nature which the little child can see. And if the child can be taught to recognize the goodness of God, he can make the transition from his "little world and sky" to the mighty system and dream of "the cosmic rings round which the circling planets fly" without losing his God among the stars, for he has been taught to think of God in terms of goodness, not in terms of space. Precisely the same emphasis helped the "children" of Israel. They began, as the early chapters of Genesis show us, with a God who could walk in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the evening; who could question the man and the woman in that garden; who made garments for them when they were driven forth. In the earliest stories there is much of the Big Man about Him. Perhaps we of the Occident interpret these stories more literally than the writers of the Bible with their oriental love of imagery ever intended, but at any rate there was this tendency to think of a God with physical characteristics. But the great prophets did for their people just what the wise teacher to-day does for the child, they taught Israel to think of the character of God and thus they prepared them for bigger thinking about Him.

When the exile came and the Jewish nation, de-

stroyed by Assyria and Babylon, existed largely in the little group of leaders (a small group surely in comparison to the powerful nation which held them captive) who had been carried captive to Babylon, the wise teaching of the prophets bore good fruitage. Forced as they were to think of the world in larger terms than just little Palestine, they rejected completely the thought of God as a Big Man. That idea would no longer do for the larger world in which they found themselves. But because the prophets had taught them so well they did not lose their God in this transition into the wider world, they simply began to think of Him in larger terms.

Is the experience of Israel true to the experience of the youth of to-day? Is he likewise forced by experiences, sometimes almost as bitter as the exile, to rethink his faith? At any rate Israel was compelled to think of God in bigger terms. Then it was that her prophets began to speak of the Spirit of Jehovah. But they were not yet thinking in the terms of Jesus although they used the word Spirit, for by the Spirit of Jehovah they mean a Representative or Messenger sent from Jehovah. We get the impression that they felt that God Himself was very far away from men but that He communicated with them through his Spirit. But Jesus brought God very near to men. He said, God is Spirit, not, God has a Spirit.

To think of God as having a Spirit or even as a Spirit is not helpful, for such ideas lead us to emphasize the "whereness" of God, or else to think of Him as a sort of ghost. If we are tempted to think of the "whereness"

of God we must either suppose Him to be "above the bright blue" or perhaps to think of Him as spread out so as to occupy all space like the ether. Neither of these ideas is religiously helpful. Jesus did not try to correct the thinking of his disciples on this point except as He turned their thoughts into other channels than such speculations. Or if Spirit means ghost to us as it does to many people we are tempted to think of God as a kind of ghost, visible to people who wear the right kind of religious spectacles.

How sane and wholesome Jesus' teaching seems in contrast to ideas such as we have been suggesting. When Jesus told the woman at the well that "God is Spirit" He did not leave her speculating about where this Spirit was to be found. He told her to stop looking for God "on this mountain or in Jerusalem" or "above the bright blue" or in the interstices of the Milky Way or at the edges of the universe or anywhere else. Nor did He suggest that she have her senses keen to detect some phantomlike ghost or some nucleus of energy. He told her that "those who worship him must bring him true spiritual worship." And we have the key in our hand. Evidently what Jesus meant by spirit is something that we have ourselves for we can give God "true spiritual worship." Spirit is what we are, or at least what we may become. We have only to think of ourselves to know what spirit is. It is what we are more apt to call in our modern phrase "personality." Jesus was saying to the woman, God is Personality, the supreme Personality. He is, as a modern writer has put it, "a loving, intelligent will."

And He is to be found and worshipped through personality, that is to say, our thinking and feeling and willing.

When someone says, "I don't know what you mean by the presence of God; I've never known God's presence; do you mean some kind of feeling like an electric current that sets you tingling with emotion?", I answer, No, not that. The great mystics have known God in such ways as you speak of and their experiences have been incontrovertible evidence to them but not necessarily to others. You know, do you not, of the presence and guidance of your mother even when great distances separate you from her physically? I do not mean in any weird or ghostly way, but her will, her thought, and supremely her love for you, that is to say, her spirit or personality guides your life as your will and mind and emotions are shaped by her. It is not her body, that may be old and worn and quite insignificant, which molds your life but her personality, her spirit. Was not that, inadequately illustrated to be sure, what Jesus meant when he said to the woman at the well that "God is Spirit; and those who worship him must bring him true spiritual worship"? Oh, but you reply, "I have seen my mother and no man at any time has seen God." And I answer, The disciples had seen Jesus and they were willing to bet their lives that God was like Jesus, no doubt more wonderful than Jesus could reveal with the limitations of our humanity upon Him, but not less wonderful. These disciples believed that in Jesus they knew God's thought about things, and his will for them, and the love of his heart. They began to experience Him, to know Him for themselves, not by some ghostly

appearance but as they came to know his Spirit through Jesus.

II. THE FORMATION OF A FELLOWSHIP

Jesus prepared his disciples for a deeper knowledge of God, not only by teaching them how to think about Him, but also by the formation of a fellowship. The disciples were bound into a fellowship one with another and all with Jesus long before they got any clear understanding of his teaching. Their intelligence was very uncertain and they were quite apt to say the wrong thing, especially Peter. But there are clear evidences that they loved Jesus and that the fellowship was an exceedingly powerful factor in their lives. Men do not eat and sleep and work together and make common friends and common foes and have common experiences to talk over without discovering that such a fellowship is one of the mightiest forces having to do with our lives, especially if it be formed about a leader like Jesus who had won them all by his charm and power, who shamed their selfish ambitions and divisive peculiarities by the grace of his personality.

One or two illustrations will serve to show the effect of this fellowship upon the conduct of the disciples. Once after Jesus had given a hard saying, the Gospel of John records that "many of His disciples left Him and went away, and no longer associated with Him." Jesus therefore appealed to the Twelve. "Will you go also?" He asked. "Master," replied Simon Peter, "to whom shall we go?" John 6:66-68 (Weymouth). There is little reason to think that Peter and the others

understood what Jesus had been saying but the fellowship that had been formed was holding them together. The same thing happened at Caesarea Philippi a little later in the Gospel record. At that time Jesus asked the disciples "pointedly," as Weymouth translates it, "But you yourselves, who do you say that I am? You are the Christ, answered Peter." With what assurance Peter speaks! But we read a few verses further and discover that this same Peter does not understand at all what he has just been saying. It was Peter's heart speaking, his love for Jesus, loyalty to the group. And was it because the group broke up that the disciples proved so faint-hearted at the time of Jesus' crucifixion? Would Peter have been faced down by a servant girl, would he have denied that he knew anything about Jesus, if the others had been at his back? At any rate it was when the old friends got together again and the fellowship re-formed that "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." The opening words of the account of what happened on the day of Pentecost are filled with meaning! "They were all together in one place." Acts 2:1.

It ought not to surprise us that "togetherness" was an important condition of this great experience of God which they shared. It is the one factor upon which we depend most to create any sort of spirit. Think of college spirit. What is it but "togetherness"? A common loyalty, a common faith attitude, a common foe on the athletic field, and being "all together in one place" and we are filled with the college spirit. And the comparison is not intended as irreverence. If we have been

interpreting Jesus aright He did not make any distinction between, let us say, the nature of the family spirit and the Divine Spirit. Both involve a way of thinking, feeling and willing. We are shocked because we so rarely think of God as having anything to do with such things as athletics. Spirit is of the same nature in God and in us, Jesus taught, for He has made us in his image and has breathed into us the breath of life. The vast difference between us and God is the result of our unholiness, the sin of our spirit, whereas God's Spirit is holy. As these disciples of Jesus gathered in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, they were bound together by ties of loyalty to Jesus whom many of them had known and loved, they had a common faith attitude, they had common foes; their thinking and feeling and willing was lifted to the plane of God's own life and "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit."

Whatever binds men together in common loyalty and Christlike service tends to reproduce this experience which the disciples of Jesus had on the day of Pentecost. The deepest religious experience which some of us ever expect to know came from the sense of fellowship in some such service as feeding the starving children of our late enemies in Central Europe. The task was a very practical one, involving a multitude of difficulties and not in the least sentimental, but one of the priceless by-products of such a piece of service was the quite extraordinary feeling of fellowship which developed among those who undertook to do such a service in the spirit, as they believed, of Jesus of Nazareth. Who does not know of the sense of joy and power which

comes through fellowship in service however unpretentious it may be so long as it be performed in willing cooperation with others. Such fellowship heightens personality, increases all our powers, gives us a sense of the abundant life and is in a measure at least like the tremendous experience at Pentecost. We no longer describe such experiences in the same language as that used by the New Testament writers. We do not think of the Holy Spirit as "impelling men as though by an external force. But it would make no difference to the reality of the experience if it proved natural to us to describe it in quite other terms, in terms derived not from the physical but from the psychical nature of man." ("The Spirit," page 155.)

III. THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

We have been trying to discover some of the ways which the disciples walked to the experience of God which came to them so richly on the day of Pentecost. We have discussed two of these pathways along which Jesus led them; the pathway of right thinking about God as Spirit who is to be found and known spiritually; and that pathway of fellowship with others who are seeking the same goal. Once more we need to remind ourselves that the early Christians did not seem to feel the need of any explanation of this most glorious experience. The words in which they describe the event emphasize their sense of God's great goodness. The Spirit "came upon them," was "poured out," "shed forth," it "entered" into men. They seem not to have cared much about the explanation but to have been tre-

mendously occupied with *the fact,* which was that they had experienced God; that they knew Him now for themselves; that this knowledge was no longer dependent upon the presence in their midst of their Master. They made use of a variety of terms to set forth this fact. The New Testament speaks of the "Spirit of God," "the Holy Spirit of God," "the Spirit of his Son," "the Spirit of Christ" and we speak of the Inner Christ and the Living Christ. All these phrases in so far as they relate to the Christian experience are but different ways of expressing the fact that God is working in their hearts for the accomplishment of the purposes which He revealed in Jesus of Nazareth.

How the outlook of these disciples of Jesus had been broadened! When Jesus called them to follow Him they were reverent Jews, strict monotheists, who thought of God as the Creator and the Divine Lawgiver. We cannot and need not say that they did not recognize God in the aspirations of their own hearts, but that was not the ruling idea they had of Him. As they lived with Jesus, they learned to see in Him the truth about God. God was a Father before He was a Judge or a King or a Lawgiver or a Schoolmaster and his Fatherhood gave new meaning to all their other ideas of Him. His laws had all been dictated by his love and his love was over all his laws. The laws were made for men and not men for the laws. They came to think of God as being like Christ. And then Jesus taught them to center their thought of God on his Love and his Will for them and his Thought or Plan for them and they began to think of God as Spirit. How their thought of God had been

enriched! And then Jesus died on the cross and the hope died out of their hearts, as the wonderful fellowship broke up. But after the resurrection came a new and sure conviction that Jesus really was the truth about God. The old fellowship was re-formed and enlarged and at Pentecost as they were all together in one place they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they began to speak of God as Father, and as Son, and as the Holy Spirit, not that they thought there were three Gods but that their thought of God had been enriched as they came to know Him through Jesus and what Jesus had taught them and finally through their own personal acquaintance with the Father.

IV. THE RESULTS OF THE DAY OF PENTECOST

The results of this profound experience were quickly apparent. First of all *their emotions were aroused* to a high pitch of excitement. They began to speak "with tongues." Exactly what happened we may not be able to tell at this distance. Twenty years later at Corinth the same thing was happening but Paul does not seem to reckon it as the most important result of the experience of God. Indeed he calls upon the individual who feels overwhelmed by the religious emotions which rise up within him so that he makes strange noises to "pray that he may interpret" them for he "that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church." In other words Paul applies the test of social worth to any emotion.

It is not strange that this fresh and real sense of the presence of God should have caused great excitement

and a flood tide of emotion. We all know something of such experiences. How good it is at some great conference under the influence of noble ideals and the appeal to Christlike service or at the rehearsal of Christian achievement to sing together at the top of our voices some splendid Christian hymn! But we need to remember Paul's counsel that we test our emotions as to their worth to other folk and as to their fruitage in service.

A second result of this experience of God was a very real deepening of the fellowship which already existed. An extraordinary sense of brotherhood developed. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all according as any man had need." Acts 2:44, 45. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." Acts 4:32. Here was no economic or political theory. It was simply unreflecting, uncalculating brotherhood. Nobody required anybody to do anything. They spontaneously expressed their sense of brotherhood in this way. The Holy Spirit evidently meant public-spiritedness. In the warmth of the moment, with this vivid sense of the Father's love and presence, not one of them thought of anything as "mine."

Wherever and whenever men have experienced God the same thing has happened. A new sense of fellowship and social responsibility has appeared. Men have been forced to stop thinking about possessions as

"mine" and have begun to think of them as "ours." It proved to be an economic impossibility to handle property in just the way that the brotherhood at Jerusalem handled it, but the splendid spirit back of that spontaneous sharing of life has always and everywhere been characteristic of a genuine experience of God.

A third result of this experience at Pentecost was that the fellowship was enlarged. There was nothing exclusive about it. It existed for the purpose of being enlarged. When the group gathered in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost it was relatively small but before the day was over they had shared their experience in such a convincing way that three thousand "souls" "were added unto them" and "the Lord added unto them day by day those that were being saved." The real crisis came, however, when the question arose as to whether race constituted a barrier to admission into the fellowship. There were many in that original group, as there have been many since their day, who could not see how men of an alien race could share this fellowship. But Paul saw it and gave his life to its fulfilment.

A fourth result of this experience was that latent gifts were aroused. Personality blossomed forth in power and sweetness as men became convinced that God is interested in their affairs and is the sanction for the best they can produce. Heightened personality resulted from the experience of God so that men were healed of their diseases of body and mind and others became teachers and prophets and of service in a variety of ways. If God is Spirit, manifesting Himself in the

spirits of men should not a deeper knowledge of Him result in the training and development of every talent and gift which may be serviceable to mankind?

But the abiding result of the experience of God was *character*. Outlasting emotion, surpassing intellectual understanding, more important than the discovery and enhancement of personal talent, growing out of the fellowship as its finest fruitage is Christlike character. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23.

Why is it that all men do not gladly accept such a gift as the gift of the Spirit? Is God unwilling that all should know Him? What prevents the experience of God? Questions like these must be our next consideration.

Chapter Five

Something Wrong with Us

STEP backward, in imagination, for a century and a half, and then into the state of Connecticut and into the town of Enfield and finally into the village church. You will see a sight passing strange to modern eyes: the atmosphere of the church is tense with emotion; people are weeping and sobbing; some rise from their seats in their excitement and distress; the whole congregation is deeply moved. You seek for an explanation. It is not to be found in the *manner* of the preacher for he stands, calmly enough, with a candle in one hand and in the other a closely written manuscript from which he is reading his sermon. From time to time he pauses to quiet his hearers that he may go on with his discourse. It must be the *matter* not the *manner* which is creating such an impression. What is the theme of his sermon? "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." With what awful realism he pictures the tortures of the damned! No wonder his hearers clutch with tenacious grip the benches upon which they sit, lest they slide then and there into the horrible pit which the preacher pictures as prepared to receive them! Is the preacher mad? No, he is one of the most brilliant and learned men of his day, a scholar, a philosopher, a logician, the illustrious Jonathan Edwards, ancestor of college presidents and men of letters, a long line of them. And yet were Jonathan Edwards to rise up to-day and preach once more his famous sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" it would not create the same impression. His modern hearers would be amused,

some of them, or disgusted or horrified, but hardly convinced of the accuracy of his knowledge on the subject, and surely not swept by the fear which turned that Enfield congregation into panic-stricken sheep.

But suppose we agree that the Puritan preachers of colonial days were not modest enough in their assumption of detailed knowledge about the future life, and suppose we agree that they needed to study once more what Jesus taught about God as Father, the main query yet remains, is it safer to sin to-day than in the days of Jonathan Edwards? Is sin a less serious matter? And someone will add, What is sin, and how did it start, and how is it passed on and what can be done about it?

We have been attempting in the last two chapters to outline what happened to the followers of Jesus, how they discovered the key to life, an organizing, centralizing, constructive experience which made them bigger persons, releasing their latent powers, uniting them in a satisfying fellowship and producing the fruits of character. If that kind of experience is available for all, why don't more people accept it and know it? If God is the kind of being Jesus said He was, why isn't that fact the most obvious thing in the world instead of being, as it is, a proposition that calls for faith? Why is faith so hard? These are all fair questions.

The Bible very definitely deals with these questions and suggests two main reasons why it is hard to believe in a God who is Father. The first reason is because there is something wrong with us. And the second is because there is something wrong with the world. The world is in the process of being made and can be

changed, and we are in the process of becoming and can be likewise transformed. These two difficulties are really two, and not just different phases of one difficulty, as may at first thought seem to be the case, and we must treat them as separate and distinct problems.

I. SOMETHING WRONG WITH US

Jesus spent no time in speculation about or in definition of this "something wrong," but by every act and word and by the contrast which his own white life made with the greys and blacks of the lives around Him He stressed the fact as no one else ever has that something is wrong with us. When challenged for associating with publicans and the unchurched, popularly called "sinners," He told the story of the prodigal son who had left his Father's house, and very clearly intimated that the elder son (the Pharisees and scribes who "murmured," Luke 15:2) was just as far away from the Father as his young brother, even though his body stayed at home. They were both lost. He told the stories of the lost coin and the lost sheep to illustrate the same situation. He didn't use the word "lost" in any technical sense, either, but in its simplest and most obvious meaning as the stories show. When He said lost, He meant just that; they were out of place. Under somewhat similar circumstances He said that they that are well have no need of a physician but they that are sick. He evidently found men who were diseased in more than body, and his dealings with, and attitude toward, the religious leaders of his day show that He

did not accept their estimate of their own spiritual health. Perhaps Jesus made few sweeping statements as to the extent of this lost and sick condition, but it is difficult to find many people then or to-day who do not seem to have "something wrong" with them when measured by his life.

Jesus had a passion for wholeness and soundness of life. Sin as He defined it was anything short of that. It was being lost or being sick, or missing the mark. It was failure to rise to the full meaning and purpose of life. When the wayward boy "came to himself," he went home.

How did sin originate? Jesus did not speculate about that question either. He seemed to feel that it was vastly more important to get the lost boy back home again than to explain why he went away in the first place. At the same time the story of the prodigal does hint at an explanation of the beginning of the trouble. The prodigal wanted to be something for himself. He felt that he could be freer away from home. He could develop his own life. He wanted to set up a life which moved about himself as a center instead of about his father. He wanted freedom and he thought it meant "cutting loose."

Possibly this desire to swing our lives around the center of self is the root difficulty with all of us. If there is some great plan in the universe such as Jesus outlined, then a lot of little selves seeking their own ends will work havoc with that plan. And then freedom means that steady obedience to the laws of our own natures which enables us to make use of all the

powers we have to their fullest extent. I see goldfish in a bowl and I think, "Poor goldfish! how cramped and circumscribed you are! What can I do for you? I know what I will do. I will set you free." And I take the goldfish, bowl and all, out into the middle of a great meadow and I gently remove them from the bowl and lay them on the meadow grass, saying, "Now you are free. Above you is the infinite blue of heaven. About you is this great meadow stretching as far as the eye can reach. You are free. Go where you please and do what you like." But the goldfish gasp and die. They are not free. They are just fish out of water. In the same way a perverted idea of freedom and the desire to swing round his own center brought the son, in Jesus' story, to the pigpen. And in the third chapter of the book of Genesis we read the same story, only this time this root evil, selfishness, and its concomitant, false freedom, drove the original pair out of paradise.

Who is responsible? Here again Jesus did not theorize. He dealt with erring humanity so mercifully and with such a large understanding and sympathy, however, that we know He saw all the way around the problem. It seems clear that there are two ways at least in which sin is transmitted; one way through the race-connection, that is through the physical, mental and spiritual equipment which we inherit from our ancestors; the other way through social forces which carry down through the centuries the burden of man's failures and of his positive wrongs so that each generation comes into an environment not of its own making but powerful in its effect upon life. A terrible example of this

latter source of evil is the institution of war. To-day when probably nine-tenths of the peoples of the world would banish war forever from the earth, they find it next to impossible to end it, for it has worked its way into the fabric of society. War has become an institution with hundreds of ramifications all sanctioned by the very organization of society. And so it is that each generation is not free to deal with the problem of international relations unhampered by the decisions of the past. This is the reason why an evil like war needs but the least acquiescence to go on down the stream of time seemingly of its own momentum. It is a super-personal thing, that is, stronger than the persons who support it because it is a social institution. Is it any wonder that man has always felt that evil is mightier than just the persons who do evil things, and that he has sought to explain its power by a personal Evil One, or Satan, only less powerful than God Himself? He has always been correct in feeling the more than human power which evil gets to itself as it pollutes the streams of heredity and environment. Jesus taught that only a super-personal force could permanently thwart sin and evil in the world, and that is why He set at the forefront of his teaching, the kingdom of God, men so organized according to the will of God as to give righteousness right of way into the future.

But Jesus emphasized a third source of sin in the world in the factor of personal choice. In fact this is the only source which He explicitly recognized. His sympathy and his mercy show that He knew how powerfully the forces of heredity and environment

affect us, and that He made large allowance for them. But, properly speaking, heredity and environment are sources of evil rather than sin. Sin, as we have defined it, is man's own failure to rise to the height of his best life. These other forces set the limits to our achievement but Jesus recognized our own responsibility for achievement within those limits. Jesus never gave any support to the idea that man is simply a victim of circumstances, with his life mapped out for him by his ancestors and society, a chip borne by conflicting currents willy-nilly down the tide of destiny, for in spite of the compassion which He showed for the unfortunate and the outcast He called them one and all to join the kingdom and rise above the hindrances of their lives. He did not encourage men to wait until the arrival of the golden age before attempting to live the victorious life. He outlined the Sermon on the Mount, which is certainly the most daringly idealistic program of conduct ever drawn up, to men with the heritage of average Jews behind them and to men living in the far from ideal environment of Palestine.

A college student fresh from the study of genetics who had been thinking carefully and to some purpose once put the whole problem in a nutshell in this way: "When I saw a day laborer working on the street with a pick and a shovel, I used to believe that he might have been President if he had tried hard enough. Now I know that that was a childish idea. Very definite limits are set to our lives beyond which we cannot go. *But none of us have got anywhere near our limits.*"

The seriousness of sin is not any less real than Jona-

than Edwards pictured it. It is not safer to sin to-day than in the days of our fathers. Sin takes no smaller toll of human life and of honor and character and happiness than in other times. Our world is not rid of the hell of impurity and the hell of greed and the hell of hate. In fact the past few years have opened our eyes to see the awful consequences of sin as no imagined inferno could ever reveal it to us. The fruitage of sin is a sobering fact which we ought not to blink at. Just because we can no longer think of God as a sort of glorified police court judge assigning arbitrary punishments for sin, we are not released from the fact of punishment and from the fact of the cost of sin. As a matter of fact the punishment of sin, as the Bible records it, is not after the manner of the police court judge. You will remember that in an earlier chapter we pointed out how the sin of David bore its hidden fruitage in the character and conduct of his sons. Born and reared in the impure atmosphere of David's court their own lives showed the results. The prophet Jeremiah after he has been describing the sins of his people seems to search around in his own mind for a punishment adequate to such wrongdoing and finally he gives utterance to this illuminating sentence, "I will bring evil upon this people even the fruit of their thoughts." That sentence sums up the dominant idea of the Bible regarding the serious consequences of sin. It is a foregleam of Paul's teaching, "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Jesus taught that sin had its genesis in the secret laboratory of the mind and that no more terrible punishment could possibly be devised than that our

thoughts should all of them come to fruition. Every daily newspaper with its sad story of crime and suffering is just a record of the awful harvesting of thoughts which have borne their fruitage. Jesus was full of compassion and understanding of the tempted and tried men and women whom He met but He never minimized the devastating consequences of sin nor ceased to call them to repentence.

Sin's most serious consequence is the paralysis of character which it effects. It cripples personality. The missionary who told the Indians not to cultivate their corn on Sunday because if they did their corn would fail to grow made just the mistake which men are constantly making about the consequences of sin. The Indians took the missionary at his word, and laid out an acre of corn which they cultivated only on Sunday, giving it the most careful attention. Of course it grew and, as a result of the extraordinary care with which it was tended, produced more corn than any other acre. The whole order of nature could not be interrupted just to support the word of a misguided missionary. He made the mistake of telling the Indians to look for the results in the corn instead of in the men.

It seems therefore that sin though defined as selfishness, as failure to rise to our own true selves, as the conscious choice of the lower when the higher is within our grasp, is none the less a terrible and enslaving fact with which we must deal. It is the fact which prevents our glad and full acceptance of the good news which Jesus brought to humanity about God.

II. JESUS AS SAVIOUR

If Jesus were only revealer, revealer of an abundant life beyond our reach because something is fundamentally wrong with us, He would be our despair not our hope. But Jesus is Saviour, or at least so myriads of men have claimed. What do they mean by speaking of Him thus? How does He save men and how can He save us to this larger life? We need to be reminded as we approach this problem that Jesus' life was not chopped up into compartments such as Teacher, Leader, Saviour. He was a living, unified personality. All that we have said about his teaching and about his leadership is also true about his power as a deliverer from the "something wrong" with us. It is only that now we are to look at this life from the particular viewpoint which we have been discussing. Jesus was not just the "crystal Christ," spotless, perfect, aloof from the sinning and the sorrowing of humanity. He lived our life and did something tremendous for men to save them from their own selves.

Jesus reveals man. He teaches us what to think about man as well as what to think about God. That He Himself lived a genuine human life is the most encouraging thing that ever happened on this planet. When we are tempted to fix our gaze upon the greed, the hate, the weakness, the awful welter of sin and disease and strife which can be found in this, our world, if we look for it, and the roots of which we can discover in our own hearts, then we need to look at Jesus. The people who emphasize the truth that this is a poor lost world and that we are but miserable worms of the dust

have forgotten Jesus. He lived here and that makes a world of difference to anyone who sees the implications of it. Some of those implications are important to think about at this point. But first remember that his *humanity was real.* The earliest heresies consisted in denying, not that Jesus was genuinely divine, but that He was genuinely human. Men found it more difficult to believe in his humanity than in his divinity. Perhaps we find it harder, to-day, really to believe in his humanity and act on the basis of it. Why did those early heretics deny his genuine humanity and say that his was only a "seeming humanity"? Because they could not believe that so wonderful a life could be lived by a real man. But Jesus was saturated in humanity. He was fondest of calling Himself Son of Man, and whatever the first meaning of that phrase may have been we are certainly right in saying that Jesus was the finest flower of the race of men. To confess the humanity of Jesus is to confess that He is the normal man. Then the cynic's "You can't change human nature" has its answer, for if Jesus of Nazareth shows us the possibilities of human nature, then it is enough for the best that we can hope or think, and within this human nature we have the possibility of sons of God.

We need to come to grips with the reality of his life as it was lived out in Palestine. The more genuinely human that life, the more hope for humanity. Only we need to define humanity in terms of what men felt it to be when they met Jesus. Just as boys try to show their maturity by copying the weaknesses of manhood, so we are tempted to define humanity in terms of its

failures. We say of a great man, He was very human, and we proceed to mention his failings. But to confess the humanity of Jesus means that henceforth humanity takes on a new dignity in our eyes and we dare to define it in the terms of Jesus' life.

Then think of *the effect of his life upon others.* Wherever Jesus came in contact with men, they began to see the possibility of a new selfhood for them. The best in every man leaped up in response to Jesus, and the lowest was shamed by Him. Men "came to themselves" in his presence like the prodigal son in the far country.

In his teaching *the supremacy of personality* is emphatic. Jesus believed in men to the limit. He believed one man was worth more than a world full of things. "For what shall a man be profited if he gain the whole world and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" In Luke's report of this saying he substitutes for life or soul the expression "his own self." Either reading is more pointed than the older translation, "soul," for soul has come to have a technical meaning with some folk and one has the uneasy feeling that it is possible for these people to be interested in your soul without caring anything about you as you. Jesus had a passion for people and He judged all institutions with reference to their effect upon people. For instance, the disciples were impressed by the grandeur of the temple but Jesus was impressed by the graft which flourished within its walls and by which the poor were cheated by an unjust monopoly operating under the sanction and to the profit of the religious ring in control

of the temple. The Pharisees were concerned about the length of prayers but Jesus was concerned about their treatment of widows and orphans. The religious leaders thought, apparently, that the Sabbath was so old and sacred an institution that it was made before man and that the Almighty made man in order to have somebody to observe this sacred day but Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath. From beginning to end He made human personality supreme.

We have thought of Jesus as the Truth about God and about Man. He got both those revelations down into the hearts of men by a great Act which has proved to be the mightiest force in reconstructing human life that humanity knows about.

Jesus died on the cross. "And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going on before them; and they began to wonder; and as they followed they began to fear. He is moving to Jerusalem with a purpose. They do not understand it. He is wrapped in thought; and as happens when a man's mind is working strongly, his pace quickens, and they find themselves at a distance behind him. And then something comes over them—a sense that there is something in the situation which they do not understand, a strangeness in the mind. They realize, in fact, that they are not so near to Jesus as they had supposed. And as they follow the wonder deepens into fear." In these words Mr. Glover is picturing what happened in the minds of the disciples as they walked behind Jesus on the way to Jerusalem. He has been telling them repeatedly that He goes to Jerusalem to face death. They have been

very intimate with Jesus. They have eaten and slept with Him. He has been constantly moving among them. They thought they knew Him. And then this happens, this something which they cannot fathom. What is it, the shadow of the cross? But Mr. Glover is not only revealing the workings of the minds of those first followers of Jesus, he is revealing what goes on in our own minds as we follow in the footsteps of Jesus. We think we know Him and then we stand in the presence of the most amazing thing in human history: the love that gave Jesus to die!

That He left Galilee where He had been popular and might easily have been honored and happy and went to Jerusalem to die; that He faced it all knowing what it meant; that He lived with Judas knowing what He would do; that He felt his kiss upon his cheek; that his heart knew the hazard of entrusting his cause to his disciples; that it was the church and the nation He loved that was to accomplish his death; all these circumstances add to the courage which He reveals in stedfastly setting his face to go to Jerusalem. But there is something more than that! Scores of men have faced death bravely without shrinking. Jesus shrank from it. Was He less courageous? No! the meaning of the cross lies not in physical courage or physical suffering or even in sacrifice. The meaning of the cross lies in the fact that Jesus was bearing our sins. The weight of the world's "something wrong" was heavy upon his heart: that mankind should reject Him; that his revelation of a Father of love and a life more abundant should be met with a cross. The marvel to us as we think of

those last days and hours of his life is that He seemed to forget Himself and identify Himself with the sinful men who were so callous and hard or so hypocritical. Perhaps this comes to clearest expression in those words uttered on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Had God forsaken Him? God was never nearer Jesus than just then. The whole meaning of the cross for us is wrapped up with the belief that God Himself was visible in every act and word of Jesus. God had not forsaken Him. But Jesus had so identified Himself with the very sinners who caused Him to be put to death that He felt that separation from the Father which they should have known had their hearts not been too hard. "He who lives more lives than one, more deaths than one must die," we read in the Ballad of Reading Gaol. From the day when Jesus went down into the muddy waters of the Jordan with the crowd who flocked to John the Baptist until his last hour on the cross He had lived Himself into the life of humanity as no one else ever has. And yet He shows us the Father. Is God like that? Does He care as much for humanity as Jesus did? Is He as saturated in humanity as Jesus was, glad with our joys and heavy with our sorrows, suffering as Jesus did because of our sins? Is the cross, not just one man beating his life out against the iron doors of fate, glorious but hopeless, but is it the Father showing Himself and his love and the agony which our sin brings to his own heart? If the cross means that, if for one brief moment we have seen clear into the Father's mind and heart, the world can never be the same again for us. If He hates sin like

that, and if the cross is the measure of God's love, we must needs say with the prodigal, I will arise and go to my Father.

The cross is not to be thought of as a "transaction," something enacted as on a stage many centuries ago on the basis of which, if we accept the stage performance, God will forgive us. The only meaning the death of Jesus can have for us is as it acts directly upon our own hearts, with a powerful upward "tug," making us abhor our sin and empowering us to nobler lives. Sacrificial love is the mightiest motive power for character in all the world of forces! In the cross of Jesus we meet sacrificial love in its supreme expression, tested to the last as perfect innocence is put to death by the accumulated forces of evil representing the very worst that we men can do! "Jesus' life helps me more than his death," students often say. "Well, it was the same love which saved men to higher things as Jesus lived among men. It was that love which got behind the armor of the sinful woman, and Zacchaeus, the rich publican, and scores of others. The cross was just the love of Jesus, and so the love of God, supremely tested and supremely triumphant.

It is love which works the miracles of transformation everywhere in life, in that measure of fullness with which it is applied. The settlement teacher may preach the beauties of cleanliness until her tongue cleave to the roof of her mouth without visible effect. But once let the miracle of love begin and toothbrushes become the rage.

In July, 1920, a little group of relief workers largely

engaged in the service of feeding hungry children in Central Europe met in conference with citizens of our enemy countries. It was the day when the economic conference at Spa opened. In the pause which marked the beginning of the deliberations a former Baltic Baron, dispossessed of his estates by the Russian revolution, quietly remarked, "There are two important gatherings in Europe to-day: one at Spa and the other here. And of the two I consider this the more important. At Spa the diplomats are gathered with their proposals written on paper but you have come with your proposals written on your hearts."

Jesus came with his proposals written on his heart, and as men came to know Him they had faith to venture that they were God's own proposals and, venturing, they were transformed from the men they had been into something like the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Chapter Six

What Must I Do?

WHEN Paul and Silas on their second missionary journey came into Macedonia, their first stop was at the city of Philippi. There they got into trouble through the conduct of a certain fortune teller. This fortune teller, who was a source of profit to her managers, publicly declared that Paul and Silas were servants of the Most High God who proclaimed the way of salvation. The account states that Paul was troubled by her repeated remarks about them and that he commanded the unclean spirit to come out of her, "and it came out that very hour." But since her masters had profited by the very difficulty of which she was now rid, they were greatly incensed at the act and dragged Paul and Silas before the magistrates. Their charge against the two was remote from their real grievance, which was scarcely an actionable offense. They appealed to the racial prejudices which seem to have been rife at Philippi. The Philippians desired to be known as one hundred per cent Romans, and so when they charged Paul and Silas with being Jewish propagandists, the magistrates in their eagerness to show their loyalty to Rome forgot Roman justice, stripped them of their clothing, and had them beaten and put in prison with their feet in the stocks. In this uncomfortable position Paul and Silas could not sleep and so they began to sing and pray, the prisoners listening. Suddenly their prayer meeting was interrupted by an earthquake shock which shook the very foundations of the prison buildings. The prisoners' chains, probably

fastened to the wall, were loosened, and the doors were opened. The jailer, arriving on the scene and seeing that the doors were open, was upon the point of taking his own life for he knew the fate which awaited him if, as he supposed, the prisoners had escaped. He was about to do what would be considered the honorable thing in such a situation. Paul, either seeing through the doorway what the jailor intended or gathering his purpose from some exclamation, cried out, "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here." Whereupon the terrified jailer called for lights; went into the prison; found things as Paul had said; and fell down on his knees before his two prisoners crying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house." (Acts 16:16-34.)

Two sentences in this vivid story are so famous as to be almost classic: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" and "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." What did the jailer mean by being "saved" and what did Paul mean by "believing on the Lord Jesus"?

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "SAVED"?

It is quite clear what the jailer meant by his question. He wanted relief and help in the perplexity of the immediate situation. He had no doubt passed through the most important crisis in his life. He was still in a state of great emotional excitement. The earthquake he

viewed with superstitious horror. But a moment before he had contemplated suicide. His little world was turned upside down. Put over against this agitated jailer Paul and Silas, calm, unperturbed, the masters of the situation! Salvation meant to him, then, although he did not put it into words, the quality of character which these strange men exhibited; their self-mastery, their fearlessness, their superiority over the incidents of life. And yet it was something more than stoicism; a Roman could understand stoicism. There was a triumphant joy about them which could not be quenched by beatings and inner prisons and stocks. They could sing in a situation like that! And their joy was not just an ecstasy which they hugged to themselves, seeking oblivion from the rough world by going into a sort of spiritual trance. They were clear-eyed men, quick and unselfish, decisive in action. They thought on the instant, not of themselves, but of the jailer who had put their feet in the stocks. "Do thyself no harm:" Paul sang out, "we are all here." No doubt the jailer had heard of the soothsaying maiden's words, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation." Having witnessed an exhibition of salvation in terms which anybody could understand he said: I want some of that; "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Salvation throughout the New Testament is *a quality of life* which liberates men, releases them, saves them from the hampering, cramping, limiting facts of life here and hereafter. It is surprising to find how many different terms are used to describe it. The variety of terms

used shows the richness and reality of the experience which lies beneath. The word *redemption* came readily to the lips of men who were accustomed to the slave market and who felt that only so strong a term could adequately describe the deliverance from evil and from the slavery of sin which they had found. *Reconciliation* described the experience for those who felt themselves estranged from God. The word *regeneration* was natural to those who felt that the message of Christ had meant a new birth to them. *Salvation* expressed the sense of deliverance from shipwreck and disaster.

But all this brings us back once more to the jailer's question, What must I do? We have been studying about this experience of God from many angles. Look back for a moment: the men of the Old Testament finding God through their own right purposes; Jesus revealing Him as the Father; leading men to know Him as Spirit through the deepening fellowship which grew up around Him; and finally revealing a powerful motive for the reconstruction of human life. In the last chapter we have been thinking about that motive, God's love as manifest in Jesus. That, at the heart of the Universe, there is One who is like Jesus,—struggling to reshape broken and crooked humanity, suffering with and for us, hurt by our sin and happy in our goodness, —that is the mightiest motive for the conquest of sin which can be brought to bear upon our hearts. We have seen consequences of all this but there still remains the jailer's question, What must I do? Granted that Jesus is all and has done all that we have described, What must I do?

II. WHAT MUST I DO?

Instead of answering this question in the words which Paul used to the Philippian jailer we turn to the words of Jesus Himself. Beginning his public ministry, He used this call, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15.) Three things stand out in this announcement: Jesus called men to set the kingdom of God as the goal of their living; He called them to reconstruct their lives according to that standard; and He called them to commit themselves utterly to belief in that kingdom. Think of these points in turn.

An adequate goal. What is life all about? We sometimes wonder. Disturb an ant hill, and what a scurrying hither and yon meets one's gaze. The ants seem to know what they are doing but to the human observer there is neither rhyme nor reason to their movements, unless he knows about the ways of ants. So are the ways of man. To the man from Mars, would our ways seem less chaotic, less insane than the ways of the ants? And we, do we know ourselves what life is all about? Profit, answers the merchant, and Production, the engineer. One after another we give our answers.

Jesus gave the most adequate answer to that question. He set as the goal of our common life the bringing in through cooperation with God of his kingdom, and by the kingdom He meant "humanity organized according to the will of God," a state of affairs on this earth, a spiritual commonwealth of brotherly men expressing God's beneficent will as they come into a realization of their sonship to the Father. He meant by this

kingdom no vague, misty ideal floating around in the thin air of speculation but the practical though difficult endeavor of squaring political, social and economic life with the ultimate fact of a Father God and brother men. He did not forget the ambition of the individual and his unwillingness to be lost in a group, but He taught that only in a brotherly group is it possible for the individual to grow to his full stature; that service indeed is the pathway to preeminence; that life is never full and rich except in such a kingdom as He outlined. We cannot here discuss in detail what Jesus meant by this kingdom. He began by announcing that God has a plan for humanity and by calling men to adjust their lives to that plan, and we are never allowed to forget that what is demanded of the individual is in reference to this great plan.

Repent ye. The Greek word means to "change one's mind." Jesus asked men to make such changes in their thinking about themselves and their relationship to their fellowmen as would conform with the kingdom which He was announcing. He called them to pronounce the same verdict upon life that He did. Repentance is something more, then, than sorrow or remorse at the disasters that come upon one when he violates the laws of life. "A man repents when he begins to feel as Christ feels about evil in himself (and in society) and to act accordingly." It means that thoroughgoing renovation of the life which Christ's standards and his program for the kingdom demand. Thus understood it is something that must occur again and again as one fails to put into practice his plans. As

he returns to Christ's estimate of his life and the life around him, he will be forced again and again to "change his mind," to rethink with utter honesty the ways of his life. Such repentance is just the renewal of fellowship with Christ in his estimate of evil.

Repentance has its social side as has been hinted at above. As a boy I used to wonder why my father concerned himself about the evils in our town, especially when he could, so far as I could see, do nothing to remedy them. Why not simply forget them? And yet they seemed to cut him to the quick, even when he was in no way directly responsible. He seemed to live a sort of public life, sensitive to the whole life of the community. I thought it would have been better to forget the things that were outside his own particular work. How our estimates of parents change with the years! Mark Twain says that at seventeen he could scarcely endure his father, the old gentleman was so ignorant; at twenty he noticed that his father said a sensible thing occasionally; at twenty-five he was astonished at the improvement his father had made in the last eight years. My father's verdict upon the evils in our town was an evidence of a fellowship with Christ far deeper and richer than my own. He shared his Master's hatred of evil and bowed in penitence of spirit at everything that hindered the life of the kingdom in his community.

As a man sees how and wherein he hinders by his life or words the realization of this new and better order which Jesus announced, he will repent.

And believe. The disciple of Jesus is called upon to launch himself actively in faith. But what does faith

mean? No word has been more glibly used and no word has come to have more varied meanings than this word faith. Upon the lips of Jesus in his opening message it undoubtedly has as its content the belief that the kingdom which he has just announced is really at hand, this kingdom of the Father God who calls upon his sons to be brotherly men. In the incident of the jail delivery at Philippi the content of faith is somewhat differently stated: the jailer was told to "Believe on the Lord Jesus." And yet in effect they are the same, for belief in the imminence of such a kingdom as Jesus proclaimed called for belief of a thoroughgoing nature in the announcer of that kingdom. Perhaps we could include in one general statement what the content of faith is: that Jesus is the truth about God and man and the world.

But what does faith mean? To describe the content of faith is not the same thing as defining the act of faith which we are challenged to make. We must think of some of the ways in which faith has been defined.

1. *Intellectual assent.* Faith has often been thought of as giving intellectual assent to certain propositions presented to the mind. I believe thus and so, we commonly say, meaning that we give intellectual assent to these things. Our minds respond with a Yes!

2. *"Going it blind."* Because faith is usually called for in realms where certain types of proof are impossible, faith has sometimes meant "going it blind," that is, accepting certain propositions which seem advantageous though contrary to reason, or as the small boy said, "Believing things you know aren't so."

3. *Hope as to the future.* Faith often means hoped-for things which are so real as to furnish strength for present living. The epistle to the Hebrews presents faith under this aspect in the eleventh chapter and it comes to explicit definition in the first verse of the eleventh chapter.

4. *Trust in people or in processes.* This is one of the commonest ways of presenting faith. We are forever acting upon faith in this sense of the word.

"There is no unbelief;
Whoever plants the seed beneath the sod
And waits to see it push away the clod,
He trusts in God.

Whoever says when clouds are in the sky,
'Be patient, heart, light breaketh by and by,'
Trusts the Most High.

Whoever sees 'neath winter's field of snow
The silent harvest of the future grow,
God's power must know.

Whoever lies down on his couch to sleep,
Content to lock each sense in slumber deep,
Knows God will keep.

Whoever says, 'Tomorrow,' 'the Unknown,'
'The Future,' trusts the power alone
He dares disown."

5. *A mystical experience.* Faith to some of the great Christian mystics has been not so much intellectual or

hope or trust in something not as yet understood, as an inner personal experience of God of such intensity and reality as to be absolutely convincing to themselves.

Of these five different ways of looking at faith Jesus by his teaching eliminates only the second. He specifically told his disciples to "count the cost"; they were not to "go it blind." Action upon such a basis becomes mere credulity or else hypocrisy neither of which attitudes was countenanced by the Master. But there is an intellectual element in faith; it does involve confident hope as regards the future; it means trust in God and the ways of God; and it does result often in the deepening of the emotional life. Faith is all this and something more. It is disciplined action on the basis of intellectual assent and hope and trust and confidence. Faith is not faith until it enlists the whole person, mind and heart and will.

Jesus called his disciples to just such a full commitment of life. He said, "Follow me." In those two words all that we have been thinking about faith is involved: acceptance of Him with the whole personality and *the will to live on the assumption that Jesus is the truth about God and man and the world.* To change slightly Donald Hankey's well known phrase, Christian faith is *betting your life* that God is like Christ.

In the story of the centurion who came to Jesus with the request that He heal his servant (Matt. 8:5-13) we have faith defined in action as well as in contemplation. This centurion had intellectual confidence; hope as to the outcome; entire trust in Jesus; and he was willing to venture on that basis. He was not afraid to put it to

the test. Jesus said of him, "Verily . . . I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

Perhaps an illustration will help to clarify this way of thinking about faith. Stefanson, the Arctic explorer, in describing his own theory and practice of Arctic exploration gives us an illuminating exposition of full-orbed faith. He tells us that he had long held as a theory that the accepted method of Arctic exploration was wrong. According to the orthodox theory, held by Nansen, Peary and every great Arctic explorer of modern times and by all the scientists without a single exception, the explorer must carry with him from his base food enough to last until he returns to that base. In the far north, they held, there is no life, or if there is any it is impossible to secure it for food. Stefanson believed that this theory was incorrect. He held that food was plentiful even in the extreme north, in the form of seals and polar bears; that Nansen and Peary and the rest had not seen these animals because, with sledges loaded with food, they had not had the eyes to see. Nor was it a mere guess with him. He reasoned that since the amount of plant life in a cubic foot of sea water is known to increase as the distance from the equator increases, and since the great fishing grounds are in the north, so there must be animal life in the far northern ocean to feed upon this plant life. So far, so good. His theory seems a perfectly safe one to hold so long as one stays in his study or his laboratory. Stefanson's mind gave intellectual assent to it. Here was something more than mere credulity. And yet it was

not faith, in the sense in which we have been defining faith.

Stefanson believed so strongly in his theory that he succeeded in persuading the Canadian government to fit out an expensive expedition for the purpose of trying it out. He advertised his theory, and selected his helpers on the basis of this theory and the expedition made its way to the northern seacoast of Alaska. He succeeded in enlisting the trust and confidence of others in the theory to the extent of making all preparations for the actual experiment. And yet it was not full-orbed faith as Stefanson very soon discovered.

When at last he actually ventured to put out on the ice of the polar sea, with only half a dozen dogs and with supplies for only a few weeks, he discovered how much short of genuine faith was the attitude of most of his helpers. His second in command refused his co-operation on the ground that Stefanson was out of his mind. No sensible man, he insisted, would venture out on the treacherous, shifting polar ice which might carry him for hundreds of miles, without supplies enough for a long stay; no authority in polar exploration agreed with Stefanson; the Indians themselves, who had spent their lives in this land, believed that such an expedition was foolhardy; and Stefanson had only suggested it for the purpose of advertising his expedition, no one believing that he would actually undertake to put his theory into practice. The majority of the men of the expedition agreed with this viewpoint.

Finally Stefanson secured two men to make the great hazard with him. The three of them went out on the

polar ice without food for dogs or men sufficient to last for more than a few weeks. They bet their lives that his theory was correct. They traveled a thousand miles on the polar ice and lived for several months on seal meat taken from the polar sea. That was Faith, magnificent Faith! It was not "going it blind" for they had the full consent of their intelligence. But they ventured beyond that which had been demonstrated, they were ready to go farther than experience warranted and verify afterwards.

Jesus called for faith of just that type. Too much of what we call faith is no more than intellectual assent of the "safety first" variety. Jesus called men, then, as he calls men to-day to "bet their lives" that He is the Way and the Truth and the Life. Christian faith is not a vague, indefinite thing. It finds sharp and clear-cut definition in the life of Jesus. It's the will to live on the assumption that Jesus is the truth about things; that God is love in spite of all appearances; that men are of supreme value in spite of our prejudices and hatreds; that the kingdom of brotherly men ruled by a Father God is the supreme goal of all our life.

What must I do? "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe in the gospel." This facing of sin in repentance and facing of God in faith, as the love of God manifested in Christ's whole life and supremely in his death upon the cross tugs at our hearts, theology terms *Conversion*. And he who undertakes it finds it will and must mean a "right about face" in his entire program of conduct and thought.

In the state of Nebraska there flows a curious river called the Platte. The natives say of it that it is a mile wide and an inch deep and that it has to be sprinkled in the summer time to keep it from blowing away. In places it has the appearance of a dozen streams rather than one, winding back and forth and intertwining among the sandbars. Now it ducks underground and flows for considerable distances and again it comes up and flows in its curious winding way. It is not a thing of beauty or of power. If a great central channel could be dug (an impossibility from an engineering viewpoint I suppose) and those meandering streams could be turned into that central channel the Platte might become a real river.

The Platte river is an allegory of human life. Not one stream of influence but dozens course through our lives. There are underground passages as well and sandbars deflecting progress. We move forward not steadily and with singleness of purpose but with what twistings and turnings and devious ways, not one motive but a mixture of motives producing each thought and act. If the forces of our lives could be organized, could be *converted* into a single central channel, our lives would become to humanity what noble rivers are to the countryside. *Conversion* is the deepening of a great central channel in our lives.

III. THE NEW LIFE

Centuries of Christian history bear witness to the fact that when that channel is dug, converting the little

wayward meandering currents of life into the central channel, the water pours through. It actually does!

Years ago, in *The Atlantic Monthly,* there appeared the record of a personal experience called "Twenty Minutes of Reality." The writer had been imprisoned for many weeks within the four walls of a sick room. Then came convalescence and the day when for the first time she saw again the outside world. It was a dull day in early spring; above, a sky as grey as a pale face; all around, the browns of winter. But there came flooding into the consciousness of the convalescent a vivid joy in everything. People walking by in the street called out her unreasoning but boundless affection. Little English sparrows seemed to flit from place to place as though they were part of a divine symphony of life. The "unendingness" of eternity which had made her shrink from the thought of the immortal life no longer troubled her, for if life was like this there could not conceivably be too much of it. And then the experience passed. Was it reality which she had experienced? Of course it was. She came to life freshly, with unwearied eyes, and found it good.

Try looking at the sunset with your head upside down and note the new brilliance of the colors as you see them through the unwearied portion of the retina. The colors are even more brilliant than that if we could see them with undimmed eyes. Life as God sees it is better than we can imagine. We talk about looking at things as they really are and we mean looking at things as the average person sees them, not necessarily as they really are. "I never saw a sunset like that," was the

criticism of one who looked on a painting by Turner. "Ah, madam, but don't you wish you could?" came back the reply. "When she comes into the room," said a youth of his sweetheart, "it seems as though the room were filled with rose-colored light and the band were playing, 'God save the queen.' " But if this youth ever plumbed the possibilities of human companionship, he knows now that there are better things than even rose-colored light and orchestra music. Life is better than we dream if we have once seen God in the face of Jesus Christ and ventured to live our lives on the assurance that He is as Jesus reveals Him. Not that the black and ugly facts of life are not real but that like a great mystic of old, we have seen "an ocean of darkness and death" and then we have seen "an ocean of light" flow over "the ocean of darkness and death."

Such an experience happened to Paul. He wrote, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." A new world? no! a new Paul, a new attitude toward the world. Paul launched his life on the assumption that Jesus was the truth about God, and it made the world over for Him. This intense Jew became a world citizen! This zealot for legalism became a man who could write the most wonderful poem on love in all the literature of humanity (I Corinthians 13). He found like Stefanson that it's possible to live on the polar ice amid a thousand hardships and perplexities in comfort and security and even in great joy, because the facts of experience do really bear out the Christian faith.

IV. THE DOUBLE SEARCH

A wee little girl once started out to find her father, and, as has happened times without number in the history of families, she lost her way, for she was far too small to know the ways of the city where she lived. At length, home came the father and finding no little daughter awaiting him at the corner in the accustomed place and discovering that she was not anywhere about the house, he with the mother began to search the neighborhood for the lost little girl. It was a Sunday morning and soon the worshippers from a near-by church, homeward bound, joined in the search, for it was a friendly community. On bicycle, by automobile and afoot scores of people were soon searching for one little girl. Presently she was found nearly a mile away from home. She had traveled in a great big circle. It was with difficulty that she was persuaded to turn back, for was she not going to find her father, and would she not find him at the next turning of the street? And she did find him, because he was seeking her.

We live in a universe like that. We seek for the Father with stumbling footsteps and by devious ways, traveling it may be in circles. But at length we find Him not so much because we are seeking Him as because He is seeking us.

"If with all your hearts ye truly seek me, ye shall ever surely find me, thus saith your God."

Chapter Seven

The Church

THE first step in the fight for character is to ally yourself with the people and the influences which are making toward the goal you have in view. The virtue of standing alone against a world of evil influences has been played up far too strongly in the moral and religious instruction of the past. There is something dramatic and fine about the great figures of history who have seemed to stand alone. We remember old general Joshua as he stood, a battle-scarred warrior, and delivered his ultimatum to the children of Israel: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers sèrved that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: *but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.*" The decision of character, the independence which finds expression in these noble words are tonic in quality. We remember Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms and Patrick Henry in his "Give me liberty or give me death" speech and all their stalwart predecessors and successors in the apostolic succession of resolute and fearless devotion to ideals whatever the cost and whatever the opposition.

Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone,
Dare to have a purpose true,
Dare to make it known,

was the version which our grandparents used. And we,

in our day, sing hymns of praise to the same quality of character, howbeit in somewhat different ways. We write and read books on how to strengthen the will. We train our salesmen in the gentle art of how to compel the wary customer to buy our goods. We picture captains of industry of imposing personality and dominant will power who seem to have attained, or at least to maintain their force of character by the persistent use of certain brands of cigarettes. And then there are the extraordinary youths with outthrust jaws, who wear, incidentally, a certain make of collar. In our own way we pay tribute to the independence and decision of character which has always found a response in strong men and women. It takes a live fish, we say, to swim against the current.

And yet I doubt the practicality of this teaching. It sounds well but will it work? We need to remember that the issues of life are only clear cut in the perspective of history. At the time they were no doubt as cloudy and confused as the great issues of our own time seem to us. It seems very simple to make Joshua's choice or Martin Luther's or Patrick Henry's; there was only one side to choose; the issue was clear cut, a choice between good and evil, right and wrong. But was it so clear then? At any rate, the issues we have to meet are never like that. There always seem to be two sides to every problem. Are we sufficient unto ourselves in the matter of decision?

And, then, isn't it a piece of unwarranted egotism to think that we can stand alone? Even the loneliest man in history will be found to be a member of some

great fellowship which sustains and strengthens him. In II Kings 6:8-23 there is a very revealing story about the prophet Elisha, the story of Elisha and the invading Syrians. Israel, at the time of this incident, was in a sad state of weakness. The Syrians from the north invaded the country and pillaged it at will. The prophet Elisha had been very serviceable to the king of Israel, revealing the plans of the Syrians, discovering the ambushes which they planned and generally making himself useful. So often did Syrian plans go awry that the Syrian king suspected a traitor in his own ranks, but his followers told him that the prophet of the enemy, Elisha, was the real cause of his discomfiture. Straightway the Syrian king laid his plans to catch this troublesome prophet. Discovering that he was in Dothan he threw a cordon of troops about the place by night. The rest of the story is best told in the words of the Bible: "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, a host with horses and chariots was round about the city. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not; *for they that are with us are more than they that are with them.* And Elisha prayed, and said, Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." This story is usually applied as teaching that God looks after his own children; that the army of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them; that the true child of God will be inviolable

and invulnerable; that he shall tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shall he trample under foot. If we try to apply such a teaching literally, we have yet to explain the whole host of martyrs whom fire and sword devoured and Christ Himself who died on the cross. No, this is not the lesson. As a matter of fact, the horses and chariots of fire which filled the mountain round about Elisha were seen only by Elisha and then finally by the prophet's servant after his eyes had been opened. The invading host of the Syrians never did see them and they played no part in the events that followed save as they nerved Elisha and his young man to deal with their difficult situation. This incident gives us just a flash of insight into the source of this prophet's strength. "Fear not," he said, "for they that are with us are more than they that are with them." Whence this superb confidence? It was just one man, one simple prophet, who matched his wits and powers against the host of the Syrian king. And yet it was more than one man, for it was one man with God!

But oftenest it is through human fellowship that men get strength. And when disaster comes it comes very often because we fail to use the human fellowship which is available. In one of the discouraging moments of his life the prophet Elijah prayed that he might die since he was the only true follower of Jehovah left in all Israel. But Elijah would have made a poor census official, for the angel assured him that there were still to be found, "seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed to Baal." Jesus relied to the end upon

human fellowship. He chose twelve men that they might be with Him. He opened to them the program of his life. In the great crises of that life He sought help from them. Three of them He took with Him upon the Mountain of Transfiguration, and in Gethsemane the same three were chosen to share the awful experience. In both cases the disciples failed, but that Jesus took them with Him shows the reliance He placed upon the fellowship of his friends even though they could not fully understand what was happening in his own soul.

No doubt if we but knew the whole circumstances surrounding every bold and independent action we should discover not one man alone, but one man nerved by a little group of faithful friends who believe in him and are ready to go with him all the way. Behind Joshua there was at least "my house"; behind Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms were faithful and powerful princes; behind Patrick Henry were many brave and patriotic hearts; with Elisha there was the young man, his servant. Perhaps Jesus alone knew what loneliness means, so far as human fellowship is concerned, and is therefore fit to be the captain of our salvation.

"I suppose the boys who go wrong usually do so through low ideals," someone once remarked to the head of a great boys' school. "No," came the answer, "boys go wrong here as everywhere else because they get in with the wrong crowd." Human association is certainly one of the most powerful factors in the making of character.

But there is yet another kind of fellowship which has

proved potent in the making of character, fellowship with good and true men and women who have lived before our time. A man's friends need not all be in the plane of the present. We need not deal with the difficult problems of psychical research to discover that a very real companionship with mighty souls is possible. The beautiful phrase which the church has always used of this fact of experience and its influence upon present living is, "The Communion of Saints." On the Mount of Transfiguration when Peter and James and John, the three disciples who might have been expected to understand Jesus, failed Him, He communed with Moses and Elijah. He knew the power that is available from the consciousness that one stands in the line of the great souls of the past. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews uses that appeal with tremendous effect in the eleventh chapter of his letter. He is writing to some little group of wavering Christians of the first century. They are few in number and weak in influence and power. Perhaps they are laughed at and know the sting of social ostracism. What a picture He draws! He calls the roll of the nation's heroes, names calculated to arouse these wavering soldiers to the highest pitch of courageous endeavor. And then in the opening verses of the twelfth chapter He pictures a great arena, the scene of a contest. In the stands, rising tier on tier, are faith's heroes, spectators of the contest which is on in the arena. Who could not play the game with backers like that and a captain like Jesus!

For all the saints who from their labors rest,
Who thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest: Alleluia!

Thou wast their Rock, their Fortress, and their Might,
Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well fought fight,
Thou in the darkness drear their One True Light: Alleluia!

O may thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win with them, the victor's crown of gold: Alleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship divine,
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine: Alleluia!

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong: Alleluia!

The golden evening brightens in the west,
Soon, soon to faithful warriors cometh rest,
Sweet is the calm of Paradise the blest: Alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: Alleluia!

I. THE IDEAL CHURCH

The purpose of the church, as I understand it, is to throw about the individual these strengthening fellowships which we have been thinking about: the fellowship of other human beings who are seeking a like goal; the communion of the saints, that is to say, the fellow-

ship of those who have fought the good fight and have finished their course; and the supreme fellowship of God Himself, which is not to be thought of as entirely separate and distinct from these fellowships, but is the consummation of them all.

The beginning of the church of Christ is usually dated from the day of Pentecost, when the group of Jesus' disciples met in the upper room and were "all filled with the Holy Spirit." But we gather the true purpose and meaning of this fellowship from the association of the twelve with Jesus. In the midst of the most popular period of Jesus' ministry, when crowds flocked to Him from all sides, He chose twelve men. Mark, with his usual conciseness reports it as follows: "He appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth." There are three purposes, explicit or implied, in the simple statement, which are fundamental to the Christian Church.

1. *The central place of Christ.* The church is an association of men about the central figure of Jesus, else we ought not to call it by his name. In this simple verse in Mark's Gospel, Jesus is not called by any high-sounding title, but He takes control of men's lives. It is rather an astounding assumption of authority that He should appoint twelve men, simply that they might "be with him."

The one unifying factor in the long and intricate history of the church is the central place of Christ. The church has never been able to agree in its definitions of *What* or *Who* Christ is, but only on the central place which He must hold. If there could file before us repre-

sentatives of every sect and group and denomination which has called itself Christian through all the centuries since Christ, what a motley throng it would be! There goes St. Simon Stylites, who lives on top of a pole withdrawn from the ways of men; and there a crusader with his sword red with the blood of the Turk; and there Thomas à Kempis, counting each moment lost until he can return to his cell; and there Luther and Zwingli quarreling over whether it should be con- or transubstantiation; and there an evangelical with hymn book and Bible under his arm; and then the modern complexity of sect and denomination. Is there anything which these can have in common? One personality binds them together, Christ's; not theories about Christ, but Christ Himself, the fact of Christ. In the ideal church, Christ will be central. Perhaps we shall never be able to agree in our theories about Him; but if He remains central for us, we shall be led into that knowledge and experience of God of which we have been thinking, and we shall under his guidance construct in cooperation with the Father that kingdom of brotherly men which was our Master's passion.

2. *Fellowship.* Implicit in Mark's statement of the purpose of the choice of twelve men as disciples is the creation of a strengthening human fellowship, the germ of the kingdom of God. Just as the central place of Christ insures a knowledge of God and fellowship with Him, so the central place of Christ insures a wholesome human fellowship. The twelve men whom Jesus gathered about Him were not necessarily congenial. There were men in that group whose political back-

ground was such as to make them naturally hostile, one to another. Matthew had been a government official, a tax collector under Rome. In the same group was Simon, the Cananaean, that is to say, the "zealous one," a member of the party of Zealots, a revolutionary political group devoted to the overthrow of the Roman rule in Palestine by force of arms. These two men were not naturally congenial. Impetuous members of that group like Peter or the "sons of thunder," James and John, must have been most trying to the more phlegmatic temperaments. Here and there in the Gospel record are hints of friction. Yet a genuine fellowship did prevail, not because they were men of congenial tastes picked with a view to harmony, but because Jesus was their leader and because He called to a great constructive task that was calculated to lift each man to his highest level.

The true church will be a brotherhood, a fellowship. Its membership will not be drawn from one social group but from every stratum of society. They will not be drawn together by like political views, but by a common loyalty to Jesus Christ. The church of Christ is primarily characterized by this extraordinary "love of the brethren" which is the fruit of the centrality of Christ and his program. Such love cannot be artificially created. It is impossible to get it by saying, "Go to, now, I will love my brother as myself," for it has to do with mind and heart and will—the whole personality—as it is ordered by Christ and his program for life. That it is more than a theory is evident from the contrast which Jesus' life made with the lives of the reli-

gious leaders of his day. They knew the commandment which enjoined love for God with all one's being and one's neighbor as one's self and accepted it theoretically without ever trying it out except in the clique to which they belonged. Love must begin at home and unless it is practicable as a law of relationships between people whose back yards are next to each other it is hardly to be supposed that it will be effective unto the ends of the earth. Sometimes it seems most difficult of application to those nearest us and in most intimate and constant contact with us. But Jesus meant something more than cliquishness!

By love, Jesus meant something more potent than sentiment. He Himself did not react sentimentally to all people, although his love was unconquerable even by the most unlovely of men in their ugliest moments. His characterization of the Pharisees in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, whether spoken in sorrow or in indignation, is hardly a piece of sentimentalism. It is a clear-eyed verdict passed upon their manner of life. He who tries to react emotionally to everyone whom he chances to meet will find either that he is simulating an affection which he does not genuinely feel, or that it is a hard, cold world in which the only principle which will work is "every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost."

The fellowship which Jesus personified and practised in his relationships had its roots deeper down in personality than the surface soil of passing moods and whims and emotions. It was rooted in the will, the will to do the Father's will and to live in his kingdom of

brotherly men here and now, whatever the difficulties. "Brotherhood," someone has said, "is the *will* to include as many as possible in my own success and joy and happiness." It means a will to share life with all brother men because we are sons of a common Heavenly Father.

3. *Service.* ". . . that he might send them forth." The final purpose of that splendid fellowship with Jesus and with one another was, Mark tells us, that the spirit and aims of Jesus might be carried forth into the world of men. That is the supreme task of the true church of Christ. As the church undertakes that task it is confronted with certain changing and temporary opportunities and we must distinguish these from the constant and abiding task which is its supreme obligation and joy.

4. *The changing tasks of the church.* Most of the institutions of our modern western civilization had their origin in the Christian church. The arts, music and sculpture and painting, were born within the doors of the church. The church gave them birth and nourished them until they grew to maturity. Perhaps it is true that the church narrowed their education, but at any rate the church was the patron of the arts. To-day the arts are separate from the life of the church. They have gone out the church door to live their own life. Similarly, education, legislative ideas, as we of the West know them, were within the church and have gone out to live a separate life entirely distinct from the church. We resent the idea of any control by the church of state or school. These and other institutions of our common life have offered opportunities for service for the church

in days gone by. The church has worked at these tasks sometimes well and sometimes poorly until the state or other organizations have taken them over. In our time the church has discovered, not for the first time, but afresh, the field of social service; the tremendous task of making over the social, industrial, economic life of society after the pattern of the teachings of Jesus. The institutional church has been created as an experiment station where these principles of Jesus may be applied to society in its complex relationships. Every body which calls itself by Christ's name has felt the influence of this great social motive. But just as surely as the task of education has gone from the church, save as it remains the splendid responsibility of followers of Jesus to carry his spirit into the whole field of education and set the goals of education in conformity to his vision of the kingdom, so surely will the various concrete problems of social reorganization move out from under the immediate eye of the church. As the church succeeds in giving the message of Jesus to society, society will take over one by one the specific tasks of social reconstruction. These are changing tasks. The church will always pioneer! She will be on the frontier of progress quick to see where and how the spirit of Jesus is to be carried into the concerns of human life.

The abiding task of the church is the task of spiritual leadership. She ever gives Jesus, the truth about God and men, to be known. She calls men of whatever race or color, political or social conviction, to gather about Jesus and learn of Him. She calls men to Christ and his spirit. She thrusts them forth into the complexity

of modern life with whatever program they can accept as the best vehicle for carrying that spirit to the world. The church, as such, does not commit herself to capitalism or socialism, to militarism or pacifism, or any other "ism." She commits herself to Christ and his spirit and she challenges men to carry that spirit by whatever means they honestly can into the problems of society. This is not to say that the church is to be indifferent to the relations of capital and labor, or to the problems of race, or to the tremendous questions of international relationships. But the deciding factor must be the spirit of Christ and its application to these problems. When the membership of the church as it thus seeks to know what his spirit is, is agreed upon certain attitudes as the clear expression of that spirit, it is for the church to move forward courageously in that direction. Perhaps it is at this point that the real contribution of separate branches of the church can be made. In the nature of the case, with the intricate problems of our society, men will differ widely even upon such points as the application of Christ's own teaching to life. The only practicable way for discovering whether any solution is Christ's solution, is, perhaps, as men in various fellowships try out their convictions. And as for the individual members of any branch of Christ's church, they cannot be indifferent to the theories of government or of economic adjustment which are prevalent. They are summoned by the very spirit of their Master to accept or reject each proposal, and that right heartily, as it furthers or hinders the Kingdom of Christ.

In the second century of our era, Pliny the Younger,

then Roman governor in Bithynia, a province of Asia Minor, wrote to his emperor asking advice as to the treatment of a certain group of people who were causing him administrative difficulty. He said of these folk that they held to a base and immoderate superstition. They were accustomed to meet at daybreak to sing hymns and offer praises to Christ as king. They took an oath not to steal or lie or commit adultery or otherwise to break the moral law. And then they partook of a common meal. If Pliny the Younger had added that these strange people looked for the coming of a new Kingdom in which Christ should reign, he would have completed his picture of that early church. Worship, fellowship, service, because Christ is central and because his Kingdom is the goal,—these have ever been the marks of the true Christian church.

II. THE REAL CHURCH

The church as we know it in our churches falls so far short of the ideal church of which we have just been speaking, that many are tempted to turn from it or to give it but half-hearted allegiance. We must think of some of its failures, even at the risk of discouragement, and see if these real weaknesses are enough to excuse us from supporting the church.

1. *Denominational rivalry.* That there is not that unity and cohesion in the church of Christ which his leadership would presuppose is a sad fact. The strength of Christendom is divided and subdivided among great and small bodies each standing for some real or fancied principle to be discovered in his teaching. And yet this

divisiveness may be easily overdone in our thinking about the church. It has been said that the church is as well articulated as was the American Expeditionary Force in France. No doubt the A. E. F. would have been far more effective had it been better organized and more carefully articulated, yet no officer thought of abandoning the army because there was sometimes friction and lack of harmony among the different divisions.

And then we will hardly get unity by letting all the churches die but one. That would be like administering a dose of poison to every member of the football squad at the beginning of the season and selecting as the 'varsity those eleven men who stood the poison best. Perhaps the weakest would be eliminated by that process but the eleven would not be in shape to meet the foe! Men climbing a hill from opposite sides get together as they go up. If they try to find each other by going around the hill, they may both start in the same direction and waste time and energy in following each other. In the same way the churches will get nearer each other as they climb, as they do the tasks given to them.

The recognition of the great need of the world and the inadequacy of any one branch of Christ's church to meet that need alone, will promote essential unity of action as it is doing in our time. However mighty the church or any branch thereof, the need is mightier!

2. *"I can be a Christian without the church."* Without discussing whether that statement be true or false, it shows a total lack of understanding of the purpose of the church, and a narrowly individualistic attitude

in striking contrast to the "breadth" of outlook usually claimed by those who make this objection. Granted that it is possible for certain individuals to get spiritual food which nourishes their souls in other places than the church, the church is for the purpose of bringing in the Kingdom. Organized evil must be met by organized good.

3. *"I don't find any church with which I exactly agree."* Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin has answered this objection by saying: "If you should find a church with which you agree, stay out of it. The church is too full of standpatters now."

4. *"I'm not good enough for the church."* Jesus called men into discipleship and that means willingness to learn and to follow. It does not mean that one claims to know but that he wants to know; not that he claims to be good but that he wants to be good. The church is "not a graduate school for saints but a kindergarten for sinners."

5. *"I don't agree with the creeds of the churches."* There are at least two things to be said in answer to this objection. First, that a great majority of the churches to-day will welcome into their fellowship anyone who can go as far as to accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ and pledge himself to his service in bringing in the kingdom. And if we have rightly interpreted the purpose of the church in the world, no one who cannot go that far will desire to have membership in it. Second, that we need great modesty in passing judgment upon the historic statements of faith which have come down to us out of the past. They call for the most careful thought and

appreciative study before we are ready either to accept or to reject them.

6. *"The church is conservative, socially, economically, politically, in every way."* True enough the church suffers from those evils which accompany long history, powerful organization, considerable wealth, expert and technical leadership. Yet the church still has the New Testament and that holds forth the promise of continual reformation because it gives Jesus to be known. Not even so solid and conservative an organization as the church can withstand the eternal newness and freshness of life which springs from Christ and his teachings. The history of the church has been one breaking forth of this newness of life after another. No association of men can hope to escape the dangers of which we have been speaking, but the divine thing about the church is that she possesses in Jesus a revolutionary force which will continually break up the crystallization of custom and form, in thought and act.

The church of Jesus' day had all of these weaknesses and more, yet Jesus kept step with it as long as He possibly could. It was in the synagogue school that He came in touch with the great prophets of the Old Testament, who furnished Him with inspiration. He found it a channel for service, going "as his custom was" into the Nazareth synagogue. He seemed to hope to the end that He might win the church to the way of life which He came to offer. And He formed a new fellowship for the purpose of achieving what that Jewish church was meant, under God, to achieve for humanity.

In his little book entitled "The College Course and

the Preparation for Life," Albert Parker Fitch has summarized effectively the claim which the church has upon the youth of to-day.

"Did you ever see a boy who was born of poor parents, ignorant, hard-working folk, who had deformed their hands by toil, and turned their nights into day, to clothe him and feed him and warm him, and send him to school? And when he grew up strong and able because of these advantages which they had lovingly and patiently gotten for him, they sent him to college and gave their love and their tears and their prayers, their time and effort and all their substance, for him and his advantage. They grew old and broken, and grey and bent, they were dull and uncouth and unlettered, not used to the polite and gracious ways of life, and yet they gave all they had to him and lost their lives in his. And he went through the graduate school and became, let us say, a polished and brilliant lawyer; he lived in a large world, in a dignified and formal and comfortable house, among well-mannered and sophisticated and highly intelligent people. And he forgot his old father and mother; he was rather ashamed of them anyway, for their lapses of language were intolerable, their views of the world absurd, and they didn't know how to dress. They were 'way behind the times.' . . . He wished they were well out of the way. Did you ever see such a boy? What would you think of him? Well, the church is your mother, my friends. She is the venerable and patient mother of us all. She has transmitted the hope of the race, the belief in the indefectible worth and honor of human nature, the vision of the good and gra-

cious God. She saved, in her monasteries and churches, the remnants of the ancient learning in the awful wreck and break-up of great empires. She kept the torch of truth alight and made life tolerable and decent in the turbulent and decentralized days of feudalism. She sent her missionaries to our savage ancestors, who were offering their human sacrifices in the dark forests of Germany and Great Britain. She founded our schools and colleges, and created and organized our philanthropies and herself sowed the seeds of democracy. Our country, our colleges, our homes, all the refuges of our life we owe to her. Out from her capacious life have these things issued. . . . And what shall we do, my brothers, we, who are her children, we, whom she has nourished and brought into the world, we, who owe our all to what she has been and done? Shall we rail at her, laugh at her, desert her, be ashamed of her? Or shall we stand by her, as she has ever stood by our fathers and by us?"

Chapter Eight

Prayer

THE religious life is sustained not only by the strengthening fellowships which surround it but by the act of prayer. Prayer is closely connected with these fellowships of which we have been speaking; indeed it is at the heart of them, and yet it is so vital a part of the religious life that it demands special thought.

Jesus prayed more than He talked about prayer. There are far more references to the fact of his prayer life than there are references to the manner of it or teachings about it. But its importance is to be observed in that his disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. They did not ask Him to teach them to heal or to preach. Is this evidence that they saw in his prayer life the source of his ministry of healing and teaching? His intimate fellowship with the Father was, by his own repeated statement, the source of all that He was and did, and his disciples did well to recognize prayer as the source of his power.

Prayer has always had a place in religious exercises. No religious meeting is complete without it. But often its place is vague and unreal, a matter of "inherited propriety," the omission of which would shock us more than its presence thrills us. In and for the individual, prayer is either absolutely discarded, or sporadically present and only rarely a powerful factor in the daily life.

But we return again and again to the problem of prayer because it was so central in the life of our Mas-

ter; because few are his followers who have not, at times at least, been aware of the resources of power available in prayer; and because now and again we meet men and women whose lives are made radiant and victorious by the fact of this act of conscious fellowship with God. I remember, in student days, meeting at noontime just after the last lecture of the morning and just before the luncheon hour with a little group of men called together by a certain Englishman who was studying among us. We would gather for perhaps five minutes in someone's room. And so well did we know one another that there was no embarrassment and restraint, and no putting of a prayer into words save as that prayer rose from the heart and clamored for utterance. Often we would spend those minutes in complete silence. And often when our brief time was up, the big Englishman would unfold his great length of body, for he was a giant in size, and standing at his full stature with face absolutely illumined he would say with utter conviction, "That was great!" And then the rest of us knew that it behooved us to stand out from under if we would avoid a crashing slap on the back or some similar evidence of the rejuvenation of a spirit in control of an active and powerful body. Prayer was so real in the life of that youth that it seemed to clear all the cobwebs from his brain and to act on his body like a cold shower. No skepticism could withstand the obvious fact that power from somewhere came pouring into his life as though "he had tapped a reservoir of energy." Who has not met such personalities? Who

has not asked himself, Is such an experience only for the religious genius? Is it at all possible for me?

I. JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT PRAYER

Jesus' teaching about prayer comes out of his teaching about God. As God is Father so prayer is the father-son relationship. These are commonplaces of religious instruction but often we have been too timid about carrying this relationship to its logical consequences. Is it really true that the relationship which exists between human parents and the child is at all analogous to the great Father of our spirits and his relationship with us and ours with Him? If it is true, and Jesus is authority for the helpfulness of the analogy, then we may learn much about prayer from human relationships.

Think of the baby! The baby prays for the moon. He stretches out his tiny hand for that shining delectable object hanging in the sky. Astronomy means nothing to a baby. There is the moon in all its attractiveness. Why can't he have it? What a fool a baby is to ask for the moon! He doesn't get the moon. The whole order of the universe can scarcely be upset to please a baby. And even the fondest parents would hesitate to grant that prayer were it well within their power. But the baby gets something better, the loving care of the parents, a sense of relationship with them through the very asking for that impossible thing. Would it be desirable to try to produce a race of babies who would know better than to want the moon?

Or considering the growing child. What an animated

question mark he is! One interrogation after another in a never ending string. Question piled on top of question. Sometimes he hardly waits for one answer before propounding another puzzle lest the object of his bombardment should have rest from labor. He is more egoistic than any Sophomore. And when the question epidemic has somewhat abated comes the information stage. The parent is forced to listen to a broadside of information and misinformation delivered with the zest of the newly informed. Sometime we will train children not to ask questions and not to give unnecessary information and certainly not to ask for the things which we think any decent parent would give his child even without the asking. But would we want to?

And then the youth! Who does not remember the tragic period of life when the expanding world dawns on one's view and he is not sufficient for it. What painful readjustments! Do you remember when you had to have some particular thing which "everybody" else had or life would be absolutely ruined? Perhaps it was something to wear. I just remember a blue jersey with a close-fitting neck which was life's *summum bonum* for a week, at least, at one time. How eloquent I was in its praises. It was neat but not gaudy in appearance; an economy surely, for the close fitting neck obviated linen; and cheap at double the price. And who has not known in such momentous crises what it is to be called in by a father or a mother for a quiet talk, and to have unfolded before one the vision of a parent's plans for a son's success, until blue jerseys in all their splendor become unimportant in comparison with the

promise of the shining years and their possibilities as they beckon from the future.

And finally manhood or womanhood! When the old cocksureness is gone, and the serious tasks of life are to do, one of the greatest joys in the world is to have a father or a mother to go to. Has some success come our way, we go to them to brag about it for we know that we can't lay it on thick enough to suit them and whatever we may say they will be sure that we haven't quite done full justice to ourselves. Or is it defeat or sorrow, to whom else may we go with the same confident expectation of receiving just the word of comfort or of wisdom we stand in want of? Or else a difficult problem confronts us. Perhaps father or mother cannot solve it for us but there is strength in their presence.

Jesus said our relation to God was meant to be a father-son relationship. How like babies we are, the wisest of us. Our ignorance, how infinite! His ways, past finding out. But it may be that his goodness and care is about us in our weakness as the mother's arms are about the smallest baby. And we are like children, asking God for those things which He will give us anyway, and offering information and misinformation about his universe in our prayers to Him. But would He have us stop asking for bread and stop asking for wisdom? Not if He is really Father as Jesus taught. For when we ask for bread we get more than bread, we get the Father's presence; our lives are consciously lifted into the relationship with Him which is our rightful status. And we are like youths bringing our passionate desires to the Father's greater wisdom, but like

the youth we may also know what it means to have the Father open out before our gaze greater plans than we have dreamed of. And we are men and women facing life and its problems, who come to a Heavenly Father for the comfort and the wisdom which we so much need.

II. HOW SHALL WE PRAY?

The greatest text book on the subject of prayer is the book of the Psalms because it *is* prayer and worship and not just *about* these great themes. As one reads these moving hymns and prayers, he is conscious that they express at least three aspects or phases of the act of prayer: preparation for prayer; the central act itself; and the realization of God's presence.

1. *Preparation for prayer.* The classic formulation of preparation for prayer is to be found in the Psalmist's words, "My soul wait thou in silence for God only, for my expectation is from Him." The positive and the negative sides of preparing for prayer are brought to clear expression in this verse. For most of us prayer is in the nature of a battle, at least at first. "Character is made by rejecting the irrelevant," it has been said. Surely prayer is made by rejecting the irrelevant. The host of trivial thoughts which crowd into our minds must be slain and that involves effort and concentration. It is no easy thing to pray. It calls for concentration and the effort of the whole personality. "My soul wait thou in silence for God only," cried the Psalmist to his restless, hurried soul. Until we can do unhurried thinking, we can scarcely expect to find God.

We are continually glorifying the next moment to the robbing of this present moment. Our minds are always in transit, moving from object to object. The rush and hurry of our lives is not so much a matter of bodily activity as of hurried, restless thinking; minds pulled hither and thither by a multitude of interests, never untroubled, never quiet. Jesus certainly did not counsel or practice the ascetic life. He lived in the full round of the activities which characterized his day. He knew what labor meant. He knew also the social obligations and opportunities, for He graced many a feast by his presence. He would not counsel withdrawal from the eager active life of youth. But it is possible to cultivate a quiet mind in the midst of whatever distractions our circumstances may present.

But the Psalmist is a better psychologist than to think that negative suggestion will prepare us for prayer. That would be like the historic advice to the children not to put beans up their noses. We don't rid ourselves of the trivial, superficial, irrelevant thoughts which hinder true worship by attending to them. We achieve the attitude and the atmosphere most conducive to genuine prayer only when a great positive purpose controls us. "For my expectation is from Him," wrote the Psalmist. He was able to still the clamorings of a hot and restless soul into silence because of a great expectancy. The little thoughts find no room in one's mind when he is expecting something big to happen. Self-satisfaction kills worship. A man who has no needs does not find God. But once let a great hunger for God and a large expectation of Him fill the heart of a man

and worship is real and living. I once climbed Mt. Pilatus on a swelteringly hot day; toiled all the way up the famous zigzag trail; reached what had seemed to be the summit, only to find that the real top was hundreds of feet farther up; scrambled on all the way and then forgot fatigue and perspiration in the glories of the Bernese Alps stretching out to the horizon's rim, their glaciers dazzling in the brilliant sunshine, their famous peaks, the Monk, the Eiger and the Jungfrau, sharp and distinct against the skyline. It was *expectancy* of that panorama, more satisfying in reality than in anticipation, which had pulled me up that long, hot, weary climb. Evidently the tourists who came up by the mountain railway had been *expecting* lunch, for when they reached the summit, they made a bee line for the Inn with only a passing glance at the scenery.

In thinking of the pathways to a knowledge of God which the men of the Old Testament walked, in an earlier chapter, we discovered that they walked the way of wonder and found God at the end thereof; that they walked the way of their own best thought and right impulses and found God in that pathway. The Psalms are rich in suggestiveness as to the material available for meditation, material which leads us Godward. The writers of the Psalms saw God's hand in the history of their own people; they knew Him in the history of their own lives; they recognized his presence in the operation of the moral law as men crashed down to failure and defeat through immorality or selfishness.

In these same ways we will prepare for prayer. How many avenues of thought, how many problems and diffi-

culties personal and social, need to be lifted to the level of God's thought!

2. *The central act of prayer.* What we have been thinking of is a vital part of worship, but worship is never complete until it goes one step further, until it results in the definite addressing of our personalities to God. "Prayer does not think or speak of God as Him, it addresses God as Thou." The writers of the Psalms were not content to bask in the sunshine of God's goodness or to remember his mighty acts with gratitude. The central act of prayer and worship in the psalms is to be found in the vibrant phrases which are here and there and everywhere: "O God, thou art my God; earnestly will I seek thee"; "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Help me, Forgive me, Lift me out of the pit, Transform me, Avenge me,—cries like these are at the heart of the psalms. Worship means, in its central act of prayer, a definite personal approach to God. It need not be in words, perhaps not even a conscious formulation of any request. We have referred to the requests, the petitions, of the psalmist because they are so prominent but prayer is not primarily petition, it is in its essence the bringing of our lives into direct and personal relationship with God. It may well be that such a relationship will more frequently mean communion than petition, but prayer does not become prayer until we move on beyond our thought of God as "Him" and address God as "Thou."

3. *The realization of God's presence.* "I sought Je-

hovah, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears." It may be helpful to realize that the sense of the presence of God is not after all the central thing in prayer, at least an emotional sense of his presence. We have made a serious mistake in interpreting prayer as an emotional experience. Prayer is rather in its essence the bringing of our thought and will and emotional life to the plane of God's thought and will and heart as we know them through Jesus. As a matter of fact most men and women throughout the centuries who have prayed, have experienced the poise and the peace and the power of God's presence. The leaders of religious movements in particular have often had most vivid and remarkable religious emotions. But there are a hundred factors which make or mar the emotional side of prayer. Physical weariness, faulty ventilation, disturbing noises, all these and countless other mechanical matters affect the "atmosphere" of the prayer life. We do well to attempt the most harmonious adjustment possible when we pray. But we need to rid ourselves of the notion that prayer is primarily dependent on the feelings. One of the finest Christians I have ever known insists that he knows nothing about the presence of God in this emotional or feeling sense. Yet he has the practice of prayer as a very real factor in his life. He regrets the poverty of his emotional life and longs for the uprush of feeling which others know. But he has rightly seen that this aspect of prayer, helpful and inspiring as it is, is not the *sine qua non* and because of his own lack he has been unusually helpful to many of a like temperament. His is no doubt an extreme

case but it helps us all to put the emphasis where it belongs in the prayer life.

But to most people there is a realization of God's presence, at least at times, which brings home to them the meaning of the old words, "This poor man cried, and Jehovah heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." The literature of religious experience is filled with this consciousness of peace and joy which comes from prayer answered in the hearts of men.

4. *Where shall we put the emphasis in prayer?* While prayer is the spontaneous expression of the personality, lifted to the plane of the Father's life, yet it is helpful to think of the notes which sound out most clearly in the praying of Jesus and in the prayers of those whose lives have been fruitful and effective because of their fellowship with God.

Gratitude and thanksgiving are often the opening notes of helpful prayer. We key ourselves to the personality of another by sympathetic understanding and appreciation. In like manner gratitude to the Heavenly Father lifts us at once into the realm where we can think his thoughts after Him.

Reverence and, correspondingly, penitence tune us to God's life. The two belong together in our thought. We are lifted out of ourselves as we think of his purity and holiness. Yet He remains a Father for us if we are penitent, for penitence we have thought of as fellowship with the Father in his hatred of sin in us and in society. True prayer begins with consciousness of God, not self-consciousness. We look to Him in thanksgiving, in reverence and in penitence. We are changed by

beholding Him, not by beholding ourselves, for self-consciousness is always weakness not strength. And sometimes people who pray much are difficult to live with. These folk become self-centered because their prayer life is not real prayer but a morbid self-consciousness.

An active sense of fellowship with our fellowmen is characteristic of true prayer. God is the great Public Spirit of the universe and nobody can really have an experience of Him which is private. He may go into his closet and shut the door, but if he truly meet God there, he will be bound up with all his fellowmen the world around. A man may find God anywhere: in the heart of a jungle or on the crowded street; but once he finds Him, he has broken into the great fellowship of the Kingdom. So it was that Jesus taught his disciples to pray, *Our* Father, give *us our* daily bread. How many did He mean to include in those personal pronouns? How many do we include?

Intercession characterized the prayer life of Jesus. He taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come." Apparently He believed that prayer could accomplish things outside our own lives. That prayer is efficacious to the one who prays seems more reasonable to many than that it should avail outside the sphere of our own personalities. Doubtless this result is most important in the forwarding of God's purposes. It remains true however that Jesus taught men to pray for the coming of the kingdom. He seemed to regard prayer as a force which God can use to accomplish things otherwise impossible. We are not to think of prayer in this respect

as a force which we create but rather as a force which we can either release or dam up. Jesus seemed to imply that our personalities, put absolutely at the service of the Heavenly Father, may be powerful in forwarding his kingdom. How this may be we do not know.

Imagination is necessary to a vital prayer life, not of course, the mere capacity for fancy, but imagination as a constructive force, the power which sees beyond the present to the fruition of the future. The children of Israel in the story of the siege of Jericho were commanded to shout before the walls of that city fell. It is not a difficult thing to shout when once walls of difficulty have crumbled. The test of faith is to set up the shout of victory before there are any outward evidences of triumph. At the tomb of Lazarus Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." But the cross was before Him; there were no outward evidences of answered prayer. He had heard the Father's voice in his own soul, the victory was won already in his inner life and there remained only the necessity of claiming it upon the fields of outer experience. Genuine prayer wins such victories in the inner life and claims them on the field of outer circumstances.

Petition has its place in the prayer life but that place is last. When in thanksgiving and gratitude, conscious of our kinship to our brother men, seeking as the goal of our common effort the kingdom of God, winning the victories for that kingdom first in our own lives that we may claim them on the plains of history, then and then only are we ready to ask for the personal requests. And with such a prayer sequence as that, we will discover

when we come to ask for things for ourselves that some of our requests have already been answered and others are unseemly. But there will remain petitions that seem fitting in such a company. Such requests are to be made known with the frankness of the child in relationship to a loving father whose wisdom is sufficient. Are we to pray for trivial things? Is God concerned with the small affairs of our lives? Is it undignified to bring to that fellowship the petty round of little things that make up our lives? The matters which we may properly bring to God in prayer cannot be set down in anybody's catalogue of legitimate prayers. What we pray for will depend upon our conception of the Father and our relationship to Him. Nothing is trivial which relates to his kingdom of brotherly men, and only those interests which do make for that kingdom have a right to be our interests. Life will not be narrowed by such a conception but rather broadened and made more purposeful, for everything which makes for the abundant life which Jesus manifested and came to propagate finds its proper place in the kingdom enterprise.

5. *Public worship* in the great variety of forms which it takes in the various branches of Christ's Church is always rich in these aspects of worship of which we have been thinking. Each act of worship ought to be valued as it *Prepares* for the prayer, as it emphasizes the *Central Act* of prayer, as it increases our sense of the *Realization* of God's presence. And each act of worship is to be tested as it helps us to bring our lives definitely to God. As one sings some great hymn of the church used by successive generations, he may well be

conscious not only of the fellowship of those whose voices blend with his but also of the fellowship of all the great and the good whose voices in the past have been lifted in this same hymn of praise or of penitence or prayer for the advancement of the kingdom. There is effort and imagination demanded in the singing of a hymn as a true part of worship, as well as musical ability. When the scripture is read, the reading only becomes a genuinely worshipful act as the same effort is expended to join by the act of one's own imagination in the thanksgiving, in the program of service, in whatever it may be which the words of scripture convey. When public prayer is offered, we profit only if our spirits actively participate in this part of the worship and make it our own. Public worship only reaches its climax for us if in hymn or prayer, in scripture reading or sermon, in silence or in responsive reading, in some exercise or other, we definitely bring our personalities to address God as "Thou."

III. THE OTHER SIDE OF PRAYER

In the story of Jacob's life as told in the book of Genesis the real crisis comes at the ford of the Jabbok when Jacob is returning from the land of his ancestors to the land of Canaan. Behind him is the pursuing Laban whom he has dealt with unscrupulously. Before him is Esau, his brother, whom he cheated out of the birthright. Jacob's extremity is God's opportunity, and the thirty-second chapter of Genesis records the result. "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." This classic story has been interpreted to

mean prevailing prayer. The wrestling Jacob and the praying Christian have become part of the accepted symbolism of religious thought. Here is portrayed, we are taught, that tenacity of spiritual endeavor which will not be content without the spiritual goods. And surely persistent search for God is not to be discountenanced. It has the highest authority. Jesus speaks of it again and again; the importunate widow; ask, seek, knock; "from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." He wanted men who were in earnest about the kingdom. Not that God is to be thought of as reluctant but that Jesus is announcing a spiritual law by which God works. We live in a plastic universe. Nothing is surer than that prayer is answered. Oh, not the words that come all too glibly to our lips but the actual inner demands which we make upon the universe! Even the prayer of the self-righteous Pharisee was answered. His real prayer was that his righteousness might be seen of men. That prayer was answered. One of the most sarcastic words ever uttered by Jesus was the word He spoke of those same Pharisees, "They have received their reward." They had made out a very small demand upon the world and across their demand were written the words, Paid in full. The tragedy of prayer is not that prayer is unanswered but that being answered, most of our prayers are really for little selfish insignificant things. "He gave them their request but sent leanness into their soul."

But the story of Jacob at the ford of the Jabbok does not say that Jacob wrestled with God but rather that

God wrestled with him, "and there wrestled a man with him." God was the initiator of that struggle. He was seeking an opportunity to come to grips with this devious patriarch and at the ford of the Jabbok He found that opportunity and laid hold of Jacob. This is the other side of prayer. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." It is not irrelevant to wonder if God be not saying, "I would that I might get those folk to listen to me," for the Bible is full of God's search for man, God's struggle with him, God's ceaseless, tireless effort to become articulate to humanity through humanity itself. The unpardonable sin is not to do this or that or the other outbreaking sin; the unpardonable sin is not to listen when the Great Spirit of the Almighty is knocking, and not to open the door to Him.

Francis Thompson in his poem, "The Hound of Heaven," puts the other side of prayer. He pictures God's search for man, his tireless pursuit of man and man's effort to escape.

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthean ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter
Up vistaed hopes, I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.

But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

The poem goes on to instance the multitude of ways in which men seek to escape the pursuit of the Almighty. In "intertwining charities," in fellowship with little children, in the delights of nature he seeks asylum, only to find that "Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me," and that "Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue."

At length he surrenders, unable to escape:

Naked I wait thy love's uplifted stroke!

And then come the words of the Divine Pursuer:

"And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!
Strange, piteous, futile thing!
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught (He said),
And human love needs human meriting:
How hast thou merited—
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
Save Me, save only Me?

All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come."

And many centuries before the great singer of the Hebrews knew the same wondrous truth:

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me.

Chapter Nine

The Goal of Life

EACH generation of Christians tends to clothe Jesus in the garments of its own idealism. To the monk of the Middle Ages he was the perfect ascetic; to the soldier he was a virile reformer with a scourge of small cords in his hand cleansing the temple of grafters and profiteers; to the scholar he was teacher and philosopher; to the revolutionary he was a "red" proclaiming everywhere that the "first shall be last and the last first"; to the artist he was the "crystal Christ" whose grace moved mankind more than his wisdom; to the weak and erring he was a friend of publicans and sinners. As one or the other of these facets of his character has flashed upon our eyes we have been eager to see this beauty or that charm as the dominant characteristic of the Man of Galilee. He was in truth the harmonious presentation of virtues which seem contradictory in smaller personalities. It is not strange, then, that the generation which worships at the shrine of Virility should find him strong, or that the generation which retreats to monasteries to find Purity in separation from the temptations of the world should imagine that his spotlessness was the fruit of the same sort of asceticism. Men wear spectacles colored by the ideals of their own day. The colored glass through which we look reveals his strength but not his tenderness, his purity but not his friendships with publicans and sinners, the grace and beauty but not the passion of his heart. We can never quite escape the personal equation in our estimate of Him.

And yet nothing is surer than that Jesus was not just a strolling Oriental teacher who invited some peasants into genial fellowship with him and led them over the hills and through the dales of Judea and Galilee. "Oh, Galilee, blue Galilee, where Jesus loved so much to be," we sing. But Galilee was a lake where men caught fish for a living in Jesus' day. He asked four such men to give up their business and follow Him. He was not asking them to leave a day's pleasure to come on a tramp with Him. He was asking them to abandon a profitable commercial enterprise in which they were trained and successful operators in order to enter upon a field of larger usefulness and greater challenge. They responded. It is inconceivable that hard-headed Jewish business men should have left their occupations just because of the rather vague charm of Jesus' personality, for an indefinite and uncertain undertaking. He put before them a very definite task, so big, so challenging that they were thrilled from head to foot by the thought of it, and even a profitable business was as nothing in comparison with it. He set for them a goal. What was it?

I. THE GOAL OF LIFE

A twofold passion moved Jesus' life: the passion for people, individual persons whom He met, not mankind in the abstract, but in the concrete; and a passion for these individuals in their social relationships, that they should be "organized according to the will of God." Unless we succeed in seeing how these two passions were one in Jesus' life and how, as they become one in

our thought and endeavor, they afford the only adequate program for life, we shall have missed the consummation of all our thinking about a working faith.

First, then, the social goal which Jesus set before his disciples was summarized in a single phrase, familiar enough to their ears, but a phrase which, spoken with the ring of authority which resided in Him and spoken with a new note of nearness, set their hearts on fire: The kingdom of God. "The time is fully come and the kingdom of God is close at hand; repent and believe this good news."

The kingdom of God was not a new catchword. It stood for the highest hopes of the Hebrew people through centuries of their history. This is not the place to sketch the fascinating story of the development of this hope. Since David's glorious reign seers had not ceased to tell of a better day for Israel. Sometimes they painted their pictures, after the model of that era of material prosperity, in quite materialistic colors. The kingdom which was to be was characterized by the defeat of hostile powers, the annexation of territory, plenteous harvests, and peace and freedom as the accompaniments of the reign of Jehovah through his representatives. Sometimes the picture took quite a different coloring, with the spiritual predominant over the materialistic as the knowledge of Jehovah and the observance of his law was the animating force in the kingdom. Again the picture showed marvelous insight into the transforming power of sacrificial love as in the poems about the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. Now, the leader of this new day is mentioned. He is to be the

Anointed One, Messiah, "great David's greater son." Again, no leader save Jehovah is mentioned. There is the same variety and richness in the manner in which this better day is to be brought in. Sometimes the triumph of this kingdom seems to involve human armies facing a hostile world and defeating all enemies by the incredible valor of divinely aided warriors. Sometimes it is expected that God, Himself, will fight for his people without their aid or cooperation. The great prophets called for justice, mercy, truth and holiness as prerequisites for this better day. The Pharisees demanded meticulous observance of the law, written and oral. But everywhere and always *the kingdom of God meant a better order of life for men on this earth.* Even when it was thought of as dependent entirely for its coming upon the supernatural act of God, without the cooperation of men, it was still a state of affairs upon this earth. Like the vision of the new Jerusalem in the book of the Revelation, "coming down out of heaven from God," the kingdom of God was to be here among men and for men. The breadth or the narrowness, the racial exclusiveness or the wider sympathy, the crass materialism or the depth of spirituality, which characterized the many attempts to give a satisfactory description of this glorious age varied with the insight of the leaders of the people, but the divine thing about Hebrew history is that this superb hope of a better order of life for men here on this earth persisted. Sometimes the flame almost went out, as materialism or ceremonialism smothered it, only to burn up again with gathering intensity at the voice of some fearless prophet

of righteousness or at the act of some courageous leader of a lost cause. When Jesus spoke that word, "The kingdom of God," He spoke to the deepest and best in every man.

Especially at that moment was Jesus' cry, "The kingdom is at hand," like a spark to tinder. A better order of life was sorely needed in little Palestine. Every sect and party save the Sadducees—who were top dogs as things were and so stood for the *status quo*—had its panacea. As a lad of twelve Jesus had heard men talk of the nation's needs and of the coming of the kingdom. "O God, that it might come now!" He must have heard them pray. He stayed in the temple court to hear such talk and even forgot the home-going folk in his passionate eagerness. He put questions that the wisest of the rabbis could not answer and at last, with the light of a divine purpose glowing on his face He said, "I must be about my Father's business."

But something more than "talk" had happened. A strange man from the wilderness of Judea wearing outlandish clothing like some prophet of old had appeared announcing, "The kingdom is close at hand." His manner of saying it with the old prophetic ring in his voice stirred men from end to end of that little land. Could it be true? Tyranny at last defeated, the principle of blood and iron overthrown, self-determination for the Hebrews, revenge upon all enemies, the proud Jewish state resurrected? Thoughts like these surged up in many minds. Then one little word turned the tide of men's thinking. Like a rifle shot, like the crack of a whip lash and with something of its sting, John's

REPENT went home. Whatever the scope and power of the kingdom might be, the complete moral renovation of the individual was its prerequisite.

Past traditions, present thinking, John the Baptist's sensational preaching,—influences like these were powerfully present in the mind of many a Palestinian in Jesus' day and He gathered them all together in his marvelous personality as He came proclaiming, "The time is fully come and the kingdom of God is close at hand; repent and believe this good news."

The kingdom of God is absolutely central in Jesus' thought. His opening announcement was of the imminence of the kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount is a description of the ideal citizen in the kingdom and his contact with the unideal conditions of our world. The parables by the sea are keyed to the kingdom, the nature of its growth, its supreme worth, its certain consummation. The choice, the training and the sending forth of the disciples are with reference to the kingdom. Jesus' own service for the sick, the unfortunate, the outcast, is a practical demonstration of the way to bring that kingdom in. His teaching about God and prayer and the spiritual life is a revelation of the source of power for the kingdom task. The cross itself is the symbol of that self-forgetting love which is the very genius of the kingdom. More than a hundred times in the first three Gospels is this phrase kingdom of God or kingdom of Heaven used. Jesus set the kingdom before his followers as the organizing goal of their lives. It was as they put the kingdom first that they would learn how to value all else in life. A single anxiety was to be theirs,

not anxiety about money or food or clothes but "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

II. WHAT DID JESUS MEAN BY THE KINGDOM?

Jesus did not define the kingdom in a single compact definition. He was more given to exhibiting a way of life than to defining it. Moreover the kingdom already meant something definite to his hearers who looked for a kingdom of God which should take the place of the kingdom of Rome. They differed widely as to how and when this kingdom should come but they were at one, as we have already suggested, in the belief that it meant a definite and improved order of life for them on this earth. Jesus gave more time to the revision of their thought of the kingdom than to a formal statement of his own. He was constructive not destructive in his teaching method. He began where John left off and by deed and word began to give a deeper content to their familiar thought of the kingdom.

It is certain that He meant as they meant by the kingdom of God "a better order of life for men on this earth." What that order of life was to be, who were to share in it, whether it was to be limited to this earth, how it was to be brought into fuller being, how and when it is to be consummated,—upon all these questions men have differed widely in their interpretations of his teaching. Perhaps the best definition of the kingdom is that of Professor Rauschenbusch because it does not beg the question and affords a basis of unity for all shades of opinion, "humanity organized according to

the will of God." If we are willing to make God as Jesus revealed Him the center of all our thinking about the kingdom we will have a constructive approach to this difficult problem. Throughout this little book we have been seeking to know the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus proclaimed a kingdom in which this God should be supreme and his will the central factor in the relationships of men. With such a starting point we can ask each question more wisely. Who will be eligible for such a kingdom? Think back to our discussion in chapter six, "What must I do?" How do men enter the kingdom? Think back over our discussion in chapters two to five. What will membership in the kingdom mean in terms of daily living? Read again our discussion of the experience of God and its results in the lives of those first Christians in chapter four. Everything we have been trying to say about the way of life which Jesus revealed is an attempt to describe the kingdom. This criterion must be applied to the wider relationships of life. Men have dealings with each other not alone as individuals but also as they are organized into institutions. It is the application of the will of God to humanity in these group relationships which is the supreme task of our day. A discussion of the intricate and baffling problems of industry, of interracial and international relationships does not come within the scope of our study. But the same principle must be applied if the kingdom is actually to come among men. For, however it comes, it will mean, if it be the kingdom Jesus proclaimed, the reign of the Father in all these realms of human relationships.

Perhaps every follower of Jesus can agree to this minimum statement of his teaching of the kingdom: A better order of life for men upon this earth as they conform to the will of the God who is revealed in Jesus. But the purpose of this chapter is not so much a detailed discussion of what Jesus meant by the kingdom as a consideration of that kingdom, thought of as the goal of our common living. If the kingdom of God as Jesus proclaimed it is to be accepted as the goal of life, then we cannot avoid asking two other questions: How is this kingdom to be established and what are the chances of ultimate success?

III. HOW AND WHEN WILL THE KINGDOM COME?

Christians have never been able to agree upon any one answer to this question. It would be presumptuous to think that our attempt to answer it can be any more satisfactory. But if we can arrive at an attitude, a spirit in harmony with the spirit of Jesus, we will have done something far more important than the formulating of a correct intellectual viewpoint. First let us think of the various answers which have been given, holding as close as may be to the statement of these answers in terms of their effect upon the practical business of living.

a. The kingdom of God will come by slow growth as the spirit of Jesus transforms individual hearts and as the regenerated individual regenerates society. We may look forward to a long, slow process. The passages in the Gospels which seem to make Jesus predict a sudden coming of the kingdom out of the heavens are either

not his own words but the current expectations of the Jews, or else they have been misunderstood, first by his immediate disciples whose minds were filled with hopes of a material kingdom, and then by his later disciples in all ages as they have faced discouraging conditions in an evil world which seems to give little promise of becoming the "kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." This form of the kingdom hope has flourished in good times and faded in bad times. Before the war men thought the world was getting better fast. Progress was steady, slow sometimes, to be sure, but certain, nevertheless. Humanity was going uphill, sometimes on foot, again on a bicycle, and occasionally with the speed of a high-powered motor, according as one saw the facts of our world. The kingdom of God was actually coming into our life. Then came the war and men abandoned hope. How foolish to think that this world could ever be saved? It was by nature evil and rotten to the core! Men might be saved but not society! Society was a sinking ship, and salvation meant saving men out of the world and not saving a world which was doomed from the beginning of time. Thus men forgot that all the forces of evil which showed themselves in the war were present and active on the day before war was declared, and that the war itself was only a great lifting of the veil, a revelation of the task awaiting the followers of Jesus in cooperation with the Father. And men forgot the great surging tide of idealism which was also unveiled by the world tragedy. No doubt our folly in thinking that progress is sure and steady apart from *people who do progress* was abun-

dantly revealed by the great war, but was the Master's confidence in humanity "even the least of these" misplaced? Jesus never gave any basis for the idea that humanity is moving steadily and mechanically upward like some great escalator upon which one need only step to be carried to the top. He called men to effort. The kingdom as he preached it was a strenuous endeavor in fellowship with God Himself who works at our side. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

b. The kingdom of God will come suddenly by an act of God Himself. At length Christ will return, not in the hearts of men but in outward visible splendor. The world will be remade by Divine Compulsion. The time for tolerance and love toward erring humanity will be ended. The familiar details of this conception of the kingdom need not be repeated. It is held in two widely different ways, as well as with a multitude of minor variations.

First, there are those who believe that Jesus expected the consummation of the kingdom to come through an act of God either during his own lifetime or with his death. Their verdict is simply that Jesus was mistaken in this expectation. He shared the world-view of his own time. But his teaching is not invalidated by that fact. His conception of how the kingdom was to come and when was but the shell in which the marvelous kernel of his thought was contained. What does it matter, they tell us, if Jesus did not hold the modern scientific and philosophical viewpoint as to the future of this earth; He did something vastly more important than that, He described a kind of life which is the goal

of all good men from that day to this. More than that He lived it here on earth and He inspired other men to live it. He opened up for us men the possibility of fellowship with God as the sanction and the inspiration of our best endeavor. His death on the cross does free men from sin as they feel the tug of the sacrificial love which gave Jesus to die and as they have faith to believe that God Himself is best seen in and through that same cross. We must make our own peace with science and philosophy not blinking at the facts which they present. We will ask the astronomer to tell us about the chances for our little earth in the vast universe. We will ask Jesus to tell us how to live with our fellows and with God. We will seek to bring in that kingdom which was the passion of his heart even though we cannot any longer count on a spectacular advent. We will have faith in its final consummation!

Second, there are those who believe that Jesus expected the kingdom to come by act of God but who believe that He was not mistaken but misunderstood. The disciples were wrong in thinking that this kingdom was to come at once. It is still so to come. A thousand years is but as a day in the sight of the Lord. Those who hold this view still scan the heavens for signs of his appearing. They believe that the time is always shortened, always too brief for the great task of winning men for Christ. To prepare men for this coming kingdom which shall be ushered in is the great enterprise. Only as social reform or international adjustment definitely prepares the way for individual soul-winning has it any place in the Christian's program, for society as

we know it is doomed and the nations of the earth are likewise doomed. The kingdom will swing low, and all those who know Christ will step aboard and the rest will be utterly and irretrievably lost.

IV. WHAT SHALL OUR ATTITUDE BE?

No one will be ready to give a final answer as to his own position in this important matter without a careful study of the teachings of Jesus. Perhaps few of us are prepared to make that study for ourselves. We have to depend upon others. But we can arrive at an attitude which shall be our own. We can test each proposal in the light of certain values which need to be conserved.

1. *We must hold no thought of the kingdom and its coming which will not square with Jesus' revelation of God as Father.* The God Jesus revealed could never be a sort of Omnipotent Kaiser enforcing his rule among men by other means than those which are in complete harmony with his nature. Jesus knew a God whose reign was ever the reign of love, who sought to win men by the mighty reasonableness of unseen yet powerful forces. His justice and his truth are the justice and truth of a Father. Nor must we forget that He is always Spirit. It is so easy to think of God in terms of the Big Man when we think about the coming of the kingdom but if it is the God of Jesus of whom we are thinking and his kingdom which we pray for, then there must ever be harmony between our conception of his rule and the earthly life of Jesus which exhibited that rule in all completeness.

2. *We must hold no thought of the kingdom which will make us slackers in carrying out here on earth the program which Jesus exemplified in himself and enjoined upon his disciples.* It is very possible to be so zealous for the souls of men as to forget that Jesus gave Himself in almost ceaseless effort for men's bodies, healing their diseases, feeding the hungry, opening blinded eyes, and in every way bringing physical life up to the normal. He recognized that "man shall not live by bread alone" but He told of a good Samaritan who illustrated neighborliness by ministering to a needy man without once questioning his race or once seeking to make Him into a Samaritan, who simply showed uncalculating love in action. That such love incarnated in practical service is the most powerful propaganda imaginable for the Christian way of life is neither here nor there to the disciple of Jesus. He manifests such a spirit, working for every good cause, enlisting under the banner of every righteous reform, seeking every peaceful adjustment of economic, social, racial and international difficulties, not because He expects by any given program to save a certain quota of souls from the shipwreck of society, but simply because, having caught the spirit of Jesus He cannot keep from such causes. He has inherited the Master's love for humanity and his passion that it might be "organized according to the will of God."

3. *We must hold no thought of the kingdom which will make us Pharisaic in our attitude toward others.* It is far too easy for the "liberal" to hold in contempt the "conservative" because of the narrowness and the

dogmatism and the materialism, as it seems to him, of his intellectual viewpoint. Conversely, the "conservative" finds it easy to apply proof texts to the "liberal" and to read him out of the kingdom because he fails to measure up to his own particular yardstick. That was exactly the Pharisaic attitude. Jesus called common men to follow Him in the kingdom enterprise. His first demand was not for a correct intellectual formulation of the meaning of the kingdom. He asked an infinitely harder thing to do but an infinitely easier thing to understand, "Follow me." I once rode on an interurban car from one city to another with a man who told me of a book he had just been reading. The book gave detailed and exceedingly dogmatic information about the kingdom and how and when it would come. My friend believed every word of it and evidently thought that the author had a private wire to the celestial regions which gave him inside information on much that is hidden from the rest of us. To me the book and its thesis were too absurd to warrant discussion, and accordingly I was quick to brand my traveling companion with the same adjective. A few hours later I rode back to the city from which we had both come and again he of the absurd book was with me. But on the return trip I learned of the man's work. He was the welfare agent of a great automobile corporation and was up to his neck in schemes for making the living conditions of ignorant foreigners decent and tolerable. He had a very practical social program and was working at it in the spirit of Jesus. How he squared his theology with his religion I don't quite know, but I am

thankful that I rode both ways with that man. Ride both ways with men before you judge them!

4. *We must hold no thought of the kingdom which will let us doubt for a moment that the kingdom will ultimately come.* The kingdom has come, in just so far as men have held to its ultimate triumph with an utter and passionate belief. Jesus swept men off their feet by just that passion. That was why hard-headed Jewish business men left their profitable enterprises to follow Him, they believed He told the truth when He said, "The time is fully come and the kingdom of God is close at hand." They were enthusiasts, wrong-headed and superficial no doubt. But forth from that little group of disciples has come a stream of influences which has gone far toward making a better order of life in this world. It is only as men believe with all their hearts that Jesus is coming, whether on the clouds of heaven or into the social relationships of men, permeating industry and education, politics and racial problems, that any great advance is possible. And really it is possible to contribute to the progress of the kingdom whether one holds to the one theory or to the other if only these values of which we have been thinking are conserved.

V. THE GOAL OF LIFE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

But what about the individual who spends himself in the effort to forward Christ's kingdom on earth and passes on without sharing in the triumph of its ultimate victory? Is there anything more for him? Ought he to be content with his small share in its advancement?

Ought he to quench the passionate desire for life which seems to see beyond the allotted three score years and ten? And what about the kingdom? Is it more than a state of affairs on this earth? When our earth becomes uninhabitable after a thousand years or a million years or a billion years, will that be the end of the story? The beautiful order of life which men through the help of God and as they conformed to his will, may have then achieved, built as it will be upon the suffering and the toil and the prayers of a thousand thousand generations of men,—will that beautiful order of life flower out for a brief day and then fade? Will "Finis" then be written at the close of the chapter of human history? These are not idle questions, for human lips have formed them since time began, and the answers which men give bear very powerfully upon human conduct.

In our own time these queries have come once more to the fore. We had thought ourselves a practical folk, living a day at a time, more concerned with this life and its concrete problems than with what must be, at best, speculations about another life. And then the war,—and myriads of young men swept from our sight in a few brief years; and the question of Job comes once more to our lips, "If a man die, will he live again?" What a strangely persistent superstition this belief in the future life must seem to be to the skeptical! For all down through the ages the majority of men have answered Job's query in the affirmative. And yet it is not right to say that the Christian belief in the future life is but a continuation of this age-old hope. The Christian hope is, indeed, quite different from the pre-

Christian form of the belief in immortality. The belief in the on-going of full-orbed personality is quite another thing than to believe in a shadowy, passionless existence after death as did the Hebrews throughout most of their history, and quite different than to believe in the Hindu or the Buddhistic karma. The Christian hope takes its coloring from the teachings of Jesus although He Himself was much more reserved in describing the future life than some of his followers have been. We must eventually turn to his teaching; but first let us think of the modern attitudes toward the problem of immortality.

We have witnessed a recrudescence of faith in the future life. From many angles men are seeking confirmation of their faith. Science is still extremely conservative with regard to the future life. All that we know of personality seems so intimately bound up with brain and sense organs that it is certainly going beyond the bounds of true science to ask for confirmation here. And yet it is unscientific to deny the possibility of the continuance of personality after death. And a wealth of evidence well within the domain of true science seems to show that the mind in its present stage of evolution is capable of establishing a dominating influence over the body. This cannot be stressed to prove that the mind will survive the body, but it leads us to expect it.

From the realm of half-legitimatized science and from the realm of pseudoscience comes a flood of psychic phenomena. Many there are who believe that existence after death is no longer a faith but an established fact, and many others who cannot go so far

believe that within a comparatively short time it will be possible to prove that men do live on after the transition which we call death. But nothing very potent as a sanction for present living has resulted from the total output of such investigations.

The Christian Church continues to direct the eyes of men to the empty tomb of Jesus, and to the transformed lives of the disciples; the former a matter of record in the gospels, and the latter an incontrovertible fact in the experience of the early church. Men who doubt the record cannot deny that something momentous happened to those quavering, faltering, disheartened disciples which made them powerful evangelists of a great good news to humanity. The fact of the transformed lives of men who have accepted the Easter faith and made it a part of their daily program of living is probably, still, more potent with the masses of mankind than the evidence of science or of psychical research. But there is a stronger basis for faith than the empty tomb or the transformed disciples, or perhaps we ought rather to say that these are evidences of the broader basis for the Easter faith upon which we must place our feet.

VI. JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT THE FUTURE LIFE

Jesus did not base his belief in immortality on science or upon the intimations of immortality in human personality or upon communications with the dead. Only once did he put into words the basis of that faith which was so apparent in his whole attitude toward life. When the Sadducees came to him during the last week

of his earthly life and put to him the stock puzzle with which they were accustomed to confuse the Pharisees, the puzzle about the much married woman and her status in the future, Jesus answered by attacking the major premise of their argument. They assumed that life in the future world will be upon the same physical basis as this earthly life. Such an assumption the Pharisees half inclined to accept and hence found it difficult to solve the puzzle. Jesus denied the major premise and so destroyed the force of their contention. Life in the future is not to be lived on the same physical plane as this life. But He did not rest content with having dexterously avoided their trap. He proceeded to state clearly the ground for his faith. "But as touching the dead, that they are raised; have ye not read in the book of Moses, in the place concerning the Bush, how God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: ye do greatly err." Mark 12:26, 27. This is an argument, of course, directed to the Sadducees who recognized no authority but the Pentateuch, but it reveals also the underlying principle which was the source of Jesus' faith and which will be the source likewise of the faith of his disciples. God, Jesus says, is a God of persons, not a God of processes. *Persons are supremely important in his eyes.* It is inconceivable that He would "scrap" a single PERSON for the sake of any cause whatever. The cause which called for the wastage of even a little child could not be a cause which has his sanction.

Jesus' teaching about the future life is just an extension of his teaching about God. He based it squarely upon the character of God. He lived his faith in such a God into every relationship of his earthly life, and facing the fact of physical death He simply projected that faith into the future. For Jesus' passion was not only for the kingdom but for persons. The kingdom as He saw it was made up of persons. He lavished Himself upon individuals. The least was not unworthy of his whole endeavor. For Jesus this is just a world of persons and God is the God of persons, and that He should "scrap" one of them is inconceivable in his eyes. "If God is at all like what Christ supposed Him to be, personal immortality is completely proved." ("Immortality," by B. H. Streeter, et al., p. 85.)

Faith in the possibility of a future life is not a different kind of faith, then, from faith in the practicability of Jesus' program for this life. If God is not the Father, then it is certainly questionable whether the attempt to make love the motive power for daily living is anything more than a bit of sentimentalism. But if God, the God of the universe, is truly a Father, no other way of life than that which calls for brotherly conduct is, in the end, practicable. It is the same venture of faith in the one case as in the other. How tremendous a venture no one can realize until he tries it out in the sphere of daily shoulder to shoulder living with his fellows. The fact of death is no more insuperable than the facts of hatred and pain and hunger and disease. Jesus seems to expect that men will find proof of their faith, not so much in scientific demonstration or in estab-

lished communications from the other world, as in testing whether the manner of life based upon the assumption that God is Love is really the way of life. If it is, it is good for all the perplexities of our world.

But some, like Mr. Wells, feel that the desire for immortality is a piece of egotism. "Whether," writes Mr. Wells, "we live forever or die to-morrow does not affect righteousness. Many people seem to find the prospect of a final personal death unendurable. This impresses me as egotism. I have no such appetite for a separate immortality; what, of me, is identified with God, is God; what is not, is of no more permanent value than the snows of yesteryear." "There is a note of idealism here; but it simply is not true to say that 'it does not affect righteousness' whether we live forever or die to-morrow. For if the Divine righteousness may lightly 'scrap' the individual, human righteousness may do the same. The most conspicuous mark of the moral level of any community is the value it sets on human personality. The moral achievement of the individual may be measured largely by his readiness to sacrifice his own life for others, but the moral height of a society is shown by its reluctance to sacrifice even its least worthy members. The disinterestedness which is content with a Universe in which his own ego will soon cease to be is much to the credit of Mr. Wells; it would not be to God's credit were He equally content."*

The whole quality of life which Jesus calls us to emulate cries out for more scope for its realization than this life can possibly afford. Jesus enhances every

* *Immortality,* by B. H. Streeter, et al., pp. 84, 85.

man's worth in his own eyes because the possibilities of personality are opened up before him. Jesus increases the significance of people for each other. But friendships are incomplete here. Jesus gives us an ideal, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect." But this life is only the kindergarten in such an educational process. Jesus gives us a vision of a new social order. But it is unrealized here. Are all these values mirages? Not unless the God whom Jesus reveals is also a mirage.

The Easter faith is just the carrying of Christian faith to its ultimate conclusion.

VII. THE RISEN CHRIST AND MODERN GALILEE

At the empty tomb the disciples heard the words, "He is risen from the dead; and lo, he goeth before you into Galilee." Not Jerusalem but Galilee was to be their rendezvous with their risen Lord. Jerusalem might have meant a glorious kingdom, a restored Israel, a Messianic King seated on the throne of his glory with the Twelve as his imperial cabinet. Jerusalem stood for majestic institutions, and pomp, and pride, and circumstance. Their own eyes had been fixed upon it as the future seat of the kingdom of Christ. And then came the words, "Lo, he goeth before you into Galilee." And what did Galilee mean? They knew too well, these Galileans. "Since the days of Alexander the vice of the East and the West had poured into Palestine. Wrong living and wrong thinking had distorted the bodies and minds and souls of men. At every turn beggars afflicted

with all kinds of loathsome diseases, cried for help and healing."* And turning their backs upon Jerusalem, the golden, they followed their Lord into Galilee with its needy men and women.

Little Galilee has grown into a world. Paul saw it expand. He saw it grow into Asia Minor and Macedonia and Achaia and Rome and Spain. He knew Galilee, the Galilee whither the risen Lord leads the way, to be that land where men need Christ and the ministry of Christlike men.

The goal of life is just persons, transformed by the spirit of Christ, organized according to the will of God, given scope in the eternities for the achievement of that full-grown manhood which Christ came to bring to men.

* Kent: *Life and Teaching of Jesus*, p. 97.

Chapter Ten

Where the Problems End

"FOR we know in part. . . . But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love. Follow after love." No wiser words than these have ever been written as touching the problems of the religious life. The writer, Paul, was not a sentimentalist. He made a massive and sustained effort to solve the intellectual problems of his faith and to give his solutions such formulation as would convince and clarify the minds of his readers. Paul had the student temperament. He was as keen as a hound on the trail of truth. He was scientific in his reverence for truth when discovered, for he altered his manner of life in accordance with his new discoveries, breaking with the old ways at terrific cost to himself in persecution. He was passionate in his advocacy of his own viewpoint; fertile in argument to establish it; rich in illustration to enforce it. Paul was a thinker; not in a sloppy, lazy fashion; but as though his life depended upon it. And yet as the ripened fruit of his experience he declared, "we know in part." We have been thinking together about the great problems of religion. To what purpose?

I. "WE KNOW IN PART"

All our meditation upon these great central convictions of the Christian faith will have borne in upon us the truth of Paul's words. Our knowledge is partial. The story of the development of an individual and the story of the development of the race bear this out.

Never again do we know as much in proportion to our vision of the field of knowledge as we do when we finish the grade school. Each forward step in the educational journey makes it more painfully evident that there is a vast region of unexplored country beyond that first range which we took to be the edge of the world. By slow steps we discover that our instructor's knowledge is but partial; that the books we study are sometimes in error; that the whole sum of human knowledge, if we could encompass it, would still be found to be faulty and incomplete. Within the educational history of so young a country as America it is recorded that a college professor was once discharged because he wrote a book, based upon original research, the theory being that the body of knowledge was complete, and that it was not only unnecessary but positively impious to try to unearth new truth. But that is not the spirit of our day. What the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote about the Word of God has become the motto of the scientific method. It is "Piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." But this same scientific spirit is very slow to claim final truth. It advances ploddingly by patiently accumulating evidence and then venturing hypotheses to explain the facts, and turning fiercely upon its own hypotheses to assail them from every conceivable angle and to find if possible the weak spot in the Achilles-like heel of the theory. For science confesses that "we know in part."

The problems of the religious life begin, we said, with

the questioner, the man behind the query, and he seems to be saying more often than not, "I don't know what I believe." Do the problems end at the same point? Have we gained any ground at all?

But there is a vast difference between Paul's "we know in part" and the student's "I don't know what I believe." Paul's accent is upon the certainties of faith, not upon the uncertainties. Tremendous certainties run all through Paul's writings, "I know whom I have believed"; "the wages of sin is death"; "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul's is the wholesome agnosticism which recognizes the limits set to our knowledge but lives by the power of those realities which are within our reach. Like Whittier he could say,

> I know not where His islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air;
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond His love and care.

"For we *know* in part" and by the part we know we shall live. It is to this end that we have been thinking through these problems of faith, keenly conscious that we may not hope to reach lasting solutions, but looking for those partial glimpses of truth revealed not only in mind but in heart which we have already been living by without fully recognizing them, and putting them

into positive and forceful expression in our lives. But it is important to think through, as fully and carefully as may be, every problem of faith, not alone that we may advance the cause of truth but that we may find help for ourselves and others in dealing with the spiritual diseases which weaken the religious life of the youth of to-day, as of all days. Some of these maladies are the result of wrong thinking and some of them are the results of the disillusionment which is part of the tragedy of youth. In order that we may see, then, the practical use of our study together about a working faith, it is our necessary though not very pleasant task to diagnose the spiritual ailments of the youth of our time.

II. RELIGIOUS MALNUTRITION

One of the maladies from which we are suffering in our time is religious malnutrition. The children of Europe were weakened to the starvation point and developed terrible diseases like the rickets, which twisted their little bones into hideous shapes, not because they did not receive enough to eat, in quantity, but because what they ate did not nourish them. Often they ate too much. I have seen college and university students in their dining halls in Central Europe eat two and three soup plates filled with potatoes. They left that dining hall with stomachs satisfyingly filled, but in a few hours the gnawing pains of hunger were upon them. Potatoes are not a complete food, and one can starve on them. Not a few students are suffering from religious malnutrition. The spiritual food which they receive

does not nourish them. I have known college graduates to boast that they went through college without changing in any particular their religious thinking. "The old-fashioned religion is good enough for me," is a fine phrase if we mean by it that we can do with the warmth, the positiveness, the courage of the faith of our fathers. Faith in that sense as exhibited by the fathers is enough. But faith of that quality will mean a daring and venturesome application of religion to every phase of the growing life. It will mean that spiritual growth must keep pace with physical and mental development.

But it is the comparative exception to discover youth, eager and active in the search for truth in other lines, but equally active and eager in maintaining the traditional ways of formulating religious truth. It is almost the rule to find youth undernourished religiously because of no adequate attempt to find and assimilate the modern interpretation of the fundamental religious experiences of the fathers. The fault is not altogether with the churches and its agencies, part of the fault lies at the door of the student himself. If we actually have the intellectual curiosity and initiative upon which we pride ourselves, we shall use it in the direction of the religious problems. I have seen the amazing effect that it has upon a student to discover that it is legitimate to use one's mind in the field of religious thinking and that, as a matter of fact, some of the most brilliant minds that humanity has produced have worked in this field. The libraries of any college contain rows of books among which are to be found not only the dusty tomes which record the outworn theories of past ages,

as in any other field of knowledge, but also the most fascinating expositions of modern thinking along religious lines. It is sad but true that many a youth of to-day is a religious illiterate, and supposing everybody to be as ignorant and as provincial in his religious thinking as he is himself relegates religion to the limbo of outworn superstition. Just now when many thinkers are declaring that the need of the world is for a revival of religion, it ought to sting the student into intellectual activity to inform himself as to what the great religious movements of the world have been and are to-day.

In no other field are we so quick to judge a subject by the chance fact of the man who presents it or the manner in which it is presented, as in the field of religion. This is, to be sure, an unconscious tribute to religion itself in its recognition that genuine religion lies deeper than words and finds its truest expression in the life. But so often it is the trivial or the superficial which turns the tide. In a certain great university not long ago an unfortunate mistake made by a college preacher made him the laughing stock of the university, and actually brought religion itself into disrepute. This particular preacher is doing far more for humanity than ninety-nine out of every hundred of his auditors will ever accomplish. We are spiritually malnourished religiously because of this very tendency to doubt a truth, or rather to refuse to consider it because we don't chance to like the way in which it is presented. This is a danger to which the crowd mind is especially susceptible, whether the crowd be from one stratum of society or another.

We live in a world which is spiritually malnourished. There is an abundance of religion in the world, but the social and physical life has outgrown it. It is suited to the small neighborhood where industry is yet in the primitive stage, but we live in a world of complex industrial and social conditions, and men simply have not learned how to apply their good intentions to this difficult problem. This is the challenge to the student of to-day. To meet it he must ask as we have been trying to ask in these pages, what religion is, fundamentally, and what the Christian religion is, and what it proposes for human life and relationships.

III. SPIRITUAL PARALYSIS

An equally dangerous, though exactly opposite, religious disease is spiritual paralysis. Where ten young people grow mentally and physically and remain children in their religious thinking, and finally relegate their religious thinking to an out-of-the-way compartment of their brains and lock the door and throw the key away, one young person does face the problem of keeping pace religiously with the growing world of ideal in other realms. And more often than not, this one youth suffers symptoms of spiritual paralysis, if he does not succumb entirely to the disease and live on physically and mentally without being able to move hand or foot spiritually. The natural history of this disease runs something like this. A student comes to college and suddenly finds himself in a religious atmosphere which is quite different from the one he breathed at home. From the very nature of the case he has never thought

of questioning the fundamentals of the Christian faith. He has lived in a community where the leaders of thought and action have gone beyond the most acute stage of questioning. It is not that they are unaware, necessarily, of the difficulties of belief, but that they have already solved some of the questions, and the others they recognize as past solution. There are practical tasks that call for the doing, and institutions which must be run, and quite naturally they forget that the youths in their midst are not in the same calm state of mind. And so the youth comes up to college, either never having questioned the great verities which he has been taught, or else supposing that he is alone in such questionings and ought therefore to sternly repress his doubts. He has been accustomed not only to a certain type of religious thinking but also to a certain type of religious observance, richer in emotional warmth perhaps, than he will find in a college community. At college nothing seems to be finally settled. All the great verities are open to question. His professors speak of certain truths in quite a tentative fashion, not necessarily because they do not believe them but because they are trying to face these religious problems in the same way that they would approach any other field of investigation. The older students pride themselves on the liberating influences which have enabled them to discard certain "superstitions." These same "superstitions" have never been separated by the youth's Sunday school teachers from the really central pillars of the structure of faith; and when he sees a bit of the scaffolding go, he assumes that the whole edifice must

presently crumble. In short, instead of a community about him in which he is the only doubter, as he supposes, he finds himself surrounded by a community in which he is the only believer, again as he supposes. When a company of people get together with that general attitude of mind, it is not at all strange that the chill of spiritual paralysis does sometimes begin to creep over the spirit of youth.

We have been trying in these studies to deal with this disease as well as the disease of religious malnutrition. "I'm not quite sure if the Bible is inspired," somebody says, and begins to question its science or its history. We have tried to meet that question not at all in a theoretical but in a very practical way, by showing how it opens up the deepest experiences of men's hearts, revealing how they found God, how Jesus led them in their thinking and their experience, how they prayed, what faith meant to them, and what repentance and the future life. We have tried to apply that to our own experience. That is the purpose of the Bible as I understand it. Have you ever seen an old-fashioned bookmark for Bibles with suggestions like these printed on it: When you are blue read such and such a Psalm, If in doubt read such a chapter and such a verse, If about to go on a journey read so and so? I am not vouching for the correctness of the Biblical knowledge or exegesis of the maker of those bookmarks, but I am sure that he knew what the Bible is for. When we find books that have more recent scientific information than the Bible, we shall undoubtedly look to them for our scientific knowledge. And when we find a book which can

tell us more about God and his ways, and men and their search and discovery of Him through Jesus, we shall use it, but such a book simply does not exist.

In the same way we have tried to meet each problem, not primarily from the standpoint of theory, but from the developing mental and social experience of youth. Think of the questions which arise and then survey the ground which our studies have covered, and ask yourself if they have aided you to escape the chill of spiritual paralysis.

IV. DISILLUSIONMENT

But there is one fell disease which we have not remedied and which we cannot remedy in the pages of any book, and that is disillusionment. May we turn, as has been our habit in this little book, to a Biblical character for help? Peter is a splendid example of a man who was disillusioned, terribly disillusioned, and recovered. Fickle, impetuous, hot-headed, over-enthusiastic Peter! We like him, we say, because he is so like us. He is a cartoon of human nature, wherein the common weaknesses of us all are delineated, perhaps with a touch of exaggeration; we hope for our own sake that it is exaggeration. But to describe Peter as changeable and impetuous does not go to the heart of the matter. He was never quite able to free his mind from the illusion that Jesus was to be the inaugurator of a glorious earthly kingdom, with himself as king, and the twelve as governors. The great tragedy of Peter's life was the disillusionment which came to him. When the soldiers came to the garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, Peter

drew his sword and hacked off the ear of the high priest's servant, confidently expecting, I believe, that he was striking the first blow in Armageddon, the final battle between good and evil which prophets had foretold, and looking for the immediate backing of twelve legions of angels and the introduction of the glorious new kingdom. *He was disillusioned.* No angels came. His Master gently rebuked him, healed the severed ear, and allowed Himself to be led off by the soldiers. Can you imagine the tumult in poor Peter's mind as he followed Jesus to the high priest's courtyard? I don't wonder that Peter told the maid that he didn't know what she was talking about when she accused him of being one of Jesus' followers. His world was turned upside down. He had to do his thinking all over again. Peter was like a man following a beautiful mirage. The desert trail had been made livable for him by the splendors he saw ahead—and then he arrived to find that his oasis was an illusion. Is it any wonder that in the first pangs of that disillusionment Peter denied that there was any such thing as water since his particular oasis had vanished?

Through the dark days of his disillusionment he must have clung to one reality—Jesus *had* lived, He *had* walked and talked with them, the charm and power of his presence was no mirage, even though the kind of kingdom they had built up around this Jesus was dissolved. Perhaps Peter and the others thought back over the old days. One would remember his words, "The kingdom of God is within you." Another would recall that Isaiah's great poems about the Suffering

Servant of Jehovah had been much upon the Master's mind. Slowly the house of thought which had tumbled about Peter's ears began to be rebuilt. His eyes began to open to new vistas of possibility. And then came the vision of the risen Christ, and they knew that He lived indeed, and after that the day of Pentecost when the Spirit descended upon them. Faith was rekindled. Disillusion gave way to vision. Listen to Peter as he closes his powerful sermon to the assembled Jews after the experience of God at Pentecost. "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified."

This story of Peter's inner development is abundantly worth our attention because it is a typical experience which comes to everyone in one form or another. But the series of disillusionments which is most critical comes during the change from youth to maturity. The key to future usefulness and success lies very largely in the right personal adjustment to the inevitable tragedies of disillusionment. If they make people cynical and sophisticated, if they pull us down to the level of "things as they are," they mark the tragedy of youth. If on the other hand, disillusionment results in vision, if the discovery of what men and things really are, brutal though that discovery may be and disheartening in its effects upon the untroubled youth, opens his eyes to see what he may do to help, he has found the way to life eternal.

Two or three instances of this type of experience may bring home to "the business and bosom" of each

of us just what this disease is. I talked with a father of his son. "Next autumn my son will enter such and such a college," he told me. "That college," he said naming it, "has always been his ideal." And then I thought of that boy, whom I know and of the experiences ahead of him. The college of which his father spoke has been talked to him since he could understand speech. He has idealized every part and parcel of its life. He will go up to that college next autumn to enter the Heaven of his hopes. And what will happen to him? He will be disillusioned. It cannot be otherwise, for although that college is a splendid institution of learning, none better, it is a place where human beings live and work and play. That college is just life, that's all; life in a splendid setting with noble traditions and helpful associations; but life with its temptations and its struggles and its defeats. He will have to learn with Tom Brown at Rugby, "the meaning of his life: that it was no fool's or sluggard's paradise into which he had wandered by chance, but a battle field ordained from of old, where there are no spectators, but the youngest must take his side, and the stakes are life and death." And happy that youth if in the break-up of his boyish dreams he finds a friend like the Doctor of Tom Brown's time, a clean true man who may help him to see beyond disillusionment to vision, and who will lead him to the Man of Galilee.

And then the inevitable adjustment of the college years! You remember your ideas of what college days would be, your high hopes, your youthful day dreams, your illogical conceptions of God and man and the

world. What has happened to these? There have been epoch-making changes in your thinking. The world war has made a new world we say, but each college generation sees changes in individual students more drastic, and surely more rapid than the world war has effected. As a world we still have a feeling that we can yet recover the peace and prosperity of ante-bellum days.

But you know there is no going back to ante-college days. You see now that many of your ideas, like Peter's, were illusions. What have you saved from the wreckage? Has vision emerged, clear and steady? A vision of service, more real if not so glittering just because the illusions have been swept away? Do you care as much about the new ideals as you did about the old? Or has the sweeping away of the outworn form of thinking robbed you of enthusiasm? That was the fine thing about Peter: he experienced a radical transformation in his thinking; no student was ever harder hit by an unexpected undermining of cherished ideas than was Peter; his world tumbled about his ears; but when he adjusted himself the same fire flamed in Peter's eye! That is a good test: Are you as much on fire for what you call the broader vision of truth as you were for the old?

The world is passing through this experience of disillusionment on a wide scale to-day. Men fought and died for the realization of ideals. It seemed that a better day was about to dawn. And now we know that many of those hopes were illusions. Like Peter, many people are denying with an oath that they ever had

anything to do with "making a world safe for democracy," or that they were on terms of speaking acquaintance with a "new world order" or "open covenants openly arrived at," and the world seems to have slipped down to the level of its disillusionments. Will vision, a clearer understanding of history, a better knowledge of differences of race and environment emerge as the basis for a surer if more gradual progress?

Disillusionment is a fact in personal and national history, indeed, in human history. What is its cure? In Peter's case there was one fact which remained unshaken by the earthquake which shattered his conception, the fact of Christ. Peter's ideas about Christ, about the kingdom which he should inaugurate, about when it should come and whom it should include had all to be revised. But the fact of Christ remained. Peter and the others could not escape the fact that Jesus lived a triumphant life upon this earth; that his life matched in its actuality the hopes of poor disillusioned men. Here was something to tie to, and it was Christ Himself who saved Peter and countless men since, who, in the welter of disillusionment and problems insoluble have clung to Him. His way of life is ever the hope of the disheartened and discouraged. That such a life has been lived, and that Jesus actually did impart his spirit to men who would follow Him—there lies the hope for us.

V. WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN

This last religious malady, disillusionment, cannot be met by correct thinking. It can only be cured by

contact with men who have kept the faith. And when in moments of greatest despair it seems as though no one could be found who is pure and unselfish and true, there is always Jesus. That He lived here under the conditions of our life is the most cheering thing in human history. Disillusionment can be cured only as men actually follow the way of life which He trod, as they are actually Christian. But what does it mean to be a Christian?

Someone once remarked that one could tell that America was a Christian country by the crosses on the church steeples, by the inscriptions on the tombstones, and by the profanity on the streets. There is more than a grain of truth in this rather cynical remark. These evidences of the power of Christ once operative in our life cannot be gainsaid. Men only swear by that which they count most sacred. But Christianity is a dead thing indeed if it only finds these cold, formal or perverted ways of expression.

We are accustomed to think of a Christian as one who performs certain religious acts or accepts and supports certain religious institutions. The Christian is one who prays, reads the Bible, attends the Sunday school, subscribes to certain credal statements and in a variety of ways backs up the established order of Christian conduct and procedure. But to define a Christian by cataloging what the average Christian does, is to mistake the manifestations of a thing for the thing itself. There were Christians before any of these forms of expression, at least as we know them to-day, were in existence. There were Christians before there were

church buildings or creeds or even New Testaments. Consequently we must test every religious act and institution by something else. The result of this attitude will be that we shall never hold any of the historic usages of the followers of Jesus too lightly, remembering that they are the result of the attempt to give expression to the way of Christ or to get help in living it. On the other hand no act or institution will be found too sacred to be continually tested by the spirit of Christ to discover if it actually does express or nourish that spirit.

A Christian is not infrequently defined as one who accepts the ethical program of Jesus. But this again is mistaking the manifestations of a thing for the thing itself. The ethical program of Jesus is impossibly high and hard, unless motive power for its achievement is available for ordinary people. Review our thought in chapter three about the way in which Jesus' ethical program leads inevitably to a relationship with God as its mainspring. In the same way service is but a manifestation of this relationship. The Christian is one who is what Jesus was and who serves as Jesus served, to the utmost limit of his ability; but he is what he is, and does what he does because he follows Jesus into the knowledge of, and experience of God which Jesus reveals. This has been central throughout our discussion. When we have done with speculating, tangled as we often are in the web of our own thinking, the clear, quiet voice of the Master sounds over the tumult of the world, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Following Jesus

means that He determines henceforth the relationships of our lives, with God and with men. It meant that to the first disciples and it must mean that to the end of discipleship.

Perhaps the best definition of what it means to be a Christian is found in six one-syllable words from the pen of Paul, "For me to live is Christ." The plain meaning of those words is just: For me to live is for Christ to live in and through me. Not that Paul would pretend to the purity or the power of Christ, but that he counts those moments to be real life when the spirit and ideals of Jesus are finding expression through him. Such a way of life is incontrovertible. It is truth incarnate, the Word become flesh and dwelling among us full of grace and truth. And so it is that Paul's great verses with which we began this chapter form the fitting conclusion to a book in which we have sought to know more fully the things of the kingdom.

"For we know in part. . . . But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love. Follow after love."

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